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Razi Abedi



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Educational Chaos



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OBSERVATIONS ON THE DETERIORATING STATE OF
EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Written by

Razi Abedi



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Published and Made by:
KITAB MAHAL (PVT.) LTD.

17- Urdu Bazaar (Al-Fazal Market), Lahore.

Phone: +92-42-37241760, 37241761

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www.facebook.com/kitabmahalbooks

Price: Rs: **400.00**

Latest Edition: 2018-19

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The readers are requested to give their opinions & suggestions for the improvement of this book.

Dedicated
To
My Students

❧ FOREWORD ❧



The problems highlighted in this small volume are spread over a period of a quarter of a century. It is therefore quite natural that there will be some repetitions. But nothing is outdated. I have, therefore, not tried to make any changes. The situation is still the same as it existed twenty years ago. Only it has further deteriorated, and our educational institutions, which once throbbed with activity, present either a deserted look or have been turned into battle grounds for warring factions of the students. The students, the teachers and the administrators have lost all hope and appear helpless before the circumstances. The anxieties and apprehensions of the parents are quite natural.

Academically, our young scholars inspire little confidence, barring some isolated individual efforts. Education no more functions as a civilizing institution. Syllabi are sub-standard, sanctity of educational institutions is already a myth from the past and the examination centres are in the control of Qabza Groups who hijack them at gunpoint. All credibility has been lost and our degrees are hardly worth the price of the paper on which they are printed.



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SECTION – I

Parameters



❧ Chapter 01 ❧

Our Educational Needs and Aspirations



The inadequacies of our educational system can be summed up in one sentence; humble needs and big plans. It is good to have big ambitions, but it is fatal to ignore limitations. All success depends on the realisation of limitations and working within them, if definite results are aimed at.

Like the other developing nations of the world we have big aspirations. And, also like most of them, we are not realistic about our Great Expectations. We would, for instance, very much like to enter the space race, and indulge in the fairy-world dream of landing on the moon in a couple of years. We miserably fail to realise that literally thousands of our villages do not even have kuchha roads which are so essential to our agricultural economy.

An education policy in the past made an effort to give an industrial bias to education. A number of polytechnics and commercial colleges were opened throughout the country and the scope of the existing Engineering colleges and universities was enlarged. The result is that now we have an alarming situation of unemployment among the technically qualified.

We have been insisting on producing qualified personnel for trade and industry without realising that these fields in Pakistan are not yet sufficiently developed to absorb these trained people. We already have a large number of unemployed graduates and M.As., not to speak of the matriculates, and now we have increased the numbers by adding these technical hands to the list, for the obvious reason that our educational planners did not consider our practical needs.

We insist on raising the standards by introducing new courses, raising the percentage for minimum pass marks and marks for the 2nd and 1st divisions. We want to have a very highly qualified, preferably foreign trained, staff in our institutions. But no one ever bothers to ask what do we need the standards for.

We spend huge sums of money in sending our people abroad for advanced courses in research. But when they come back we have no means of benefiting from their labour and talents. Their higher standards become a mere status symbol with no advantage to the country and no satisfaction to their academic aspirations.

The worst follows when these highly qualified people find their way into the educational system of the country. They are disgusted with the performance of the students and the less qualified teachers. They want to improve the standard, which to the average student appears no more than high brownish snobbery. These highly qualified people fail to realise that most of their students are not inspired by the high ideas of pursuit of knowledge. They do not want to get education. They even know the irrelevance of their education to their practical needs. They know that education has been imposed upon them. They are simply not interested.

Most of them had the opportunity of going to school, and were thus deprived of a vocational training. They matriculated, some of them with distinction too. But there are no jobs. A few, the luckier ones succeed in getting admission to a college. Others join' the ranks of the unemployed. They pass the Higher Secondary examination. Again no jobs. Some of them go in for a degree course. The rest swell the number of the unemployed. The process goes on. They graduate, secure a Master's degree, then another, then still another. Some go in for Law, others join some certificate or diploma course of dubious merit. Most of these young stragglers would have welcomed a job at any stage of their educational career.

Worse still, whatever education they have is irrelevant to the needs of life. Their binomial theorem, their logic, their laws of Thermodynamics — high sounding terms, no doubt — bring them no practical benefit. A graduate in Chemistry cannot remove a stain from his trousers. The washerman round the corner knows more about this chemical operation. Physics students have spent years in calculating the value of 'G' first with a simple pendulum, and then with a compound one. Our misfortune is that we do not prepare our students for life. We prepare them for examinations.

They work to get degrees, not so much as certificates of academic accomplishment, but as 'work-permits'. His degree is important to a student only so far as it can get him a job. He has no interest in his subject. He dislikes the discipline of the class room, demands the postponement of the examinations, creates disorder on the campus, demonstrates for the lowering of pass marks and the percentage for a higher division.

This is the type of student that is the major cause of disturbance and violence on the campus, and disgust among the students. Can we honestly blame such students for this behaviour? I do not know of others. But the educator is sympathetic and feels sorry for them.

The problem for the planner of education in Pakistan is thus not a problem of raising the standards, but of devising means to save a large number of our youth from the tyranny of an imposed education. In the first instance, we should try to make education as interesting and relevant to life as possible. We must pay our homage to the genius of Aristotle, but we must not for that matter send a Galileo to prison if he finds that Aristotle's law of the falling bodies is not supported by facts. Which we provide high academic instruction to our student we must also prepare him for life.

This cannot be done in the existing educational set-up in which a school is treated as a fragment cut from life, existing in isolation from its surroundings. A school should be an integral

part of life. And whatever he learns or does there should be relevant to the life the student lives in and out of the school.

All fundamental reform should begin at the foundation, at the primary level in education. No doubt we make ambitious plans for universal primary education. But these are doomed to fail if the policy makers do not step down from their Elysian heights and look into the conditions of life prevailing at the very lowest level of our social strata. A vast majority of our people the peasant, the labourer, the small craftsman, the sweeper, and the domestic servant — cannot afford to send their children to school since every member of their family, male or female, young or old, is an earning member, contributing to whatever meagre income the family can raise.

Education entails large expenses, and the teacher will insist on proper dress too, books, note-books, clothes, which, even if you provide for free education, are not within the means of a vast majority. We should provide education, but at the same time ensure that the student will not thus be deprived of his position as the bread winner for the family. We should see to it that after spending 12 or 16 years in education he does not lose his earning capacity as compared to his Brother who stuck to a trade all these years and is by now well established in his vocation. An M.A., for instance, if lucky, has the prospect of earning about 5 rupees a day, whereas a mason or a carpenter after such a long experience in his trade may easily bargain to more than 10 rupees a day (In 1972).

With these considerations in mind I have a practical suggestion to make. Let our schools be centres of learning, .but at the same time develop them as centres not only of vocational training but also of vocational employment.

Let every primary and secondary school be equipped with various types of workshops which can cater to the day-to-day needs of the community served by the school. I must caution here that by vocational training I do not mean a course in manual labour or handicraft taken as a hobby, nor even a course in some particular trade, as is now done in the

polytechnics and the commercial institutes. What I mean is the opening of actual workshops. Workshops that accept work on business and function in competition with other workshops in the area. The student-worker should be paid wages according to the work he has done. He should be educated to be aware of his right to work and his right to proper wages, so that he does not feel ashamed to work for money. Effort should be made to develop these workshops as self-supporting units.

What is happening now in the name of education is cruel. Most of our students come from the working classes. They are detached from the trades of their fathers and are put into the schools. They are given a sophisticated education, which not only makes them incapable of pursuing their traditional trades, it rather creates contempt in their minds for these trades and professions. As a consequence they are thrown into a make-believe world of complacent optimism. They go on inculcating in themselves a kind of superiority complex, creating a vicious chain of false values and self-deceptions around them. They are lost to their trades to their parents, to their society, and ultimately to themselves. The present educational set up is a systematic process of producing unemployed, frustrated, and dejected youth — the lost souls.

The greatest need of today is to save the student from a general education which prepares him for nothing, and help him, through socialised education, to achieve some definite goal in life. The proposed workshop attached to the school could be one positive step in this direction. At his best, he goes on reading books after books and listening to lecture after lecture, hoping that some day the mysteries will suddenly burst open for him and he will enter a world of wonder, excitement and noble achievements. What actually happens is that the enthusiasm of early youth gradually darkens into despondency and bitterness. He hates the school, he hates his books; and very naturally he hates his teacher.

Enhancing the status of teacher is very important for maintaining good educational standards. But the status of the teacher cannot be raised by just giving him more money (which

no doubt is a very urgent need of his) nor even by inviting him to big parties. In order to be loved and respected the teacher must make himself of some positive worth to the student. One cannot expect to be instrumental in wasting the lives of young people and hope to earn their love and respect. In order to make the teacher respectable, education must be made worthwhile and meaningful. The student will love his school if the schools has given him anything better than a sneering contempt for everything around him.

The student will thus be able to learn a trade in actual working conditions, and after completing his education, will either be absorbed in his own workshop, or will be in a better position to secure a job in a similar workshop, since he has already been working in the market and knows its conditions. He will not meet the fate of those who have diplomas, or even degrees from technical institutions, but who do not know anything about the practical difficulties of their trades, and can't get a job without a good recommendation, since a degree is the least recommendation for commercial purposes. The employer must know a candidate as a worker before he is persuaded to consider him for employment.

The greatest advantage of this system, from the educational point of view, will be a complete involvement of the student in everything associated with his school. He will offer all his allegiance to it. Its property will be his property, and its teachers will be his real patrons and guides, respected and loved by him. This will help in removing the present distrust between the teacher and the student. Another educational advantage will be that after finishing a stage of his education a student will have before him two clear alternatives: either pursuing higher education or going in for a vocation. The seats of higher learning will thus be relieved of the unwilling student, and the tremendous pressure of the admission seekers will be considerably reduced.



SECTION – II

Higher Education



❧ Chapter 01 ❧

Falling Academic Standards in the Universities



We hear of the deterioration in academic standards these days everywhere. In the Public Service Commissions, in various government offices and private establishments, and in the educational institutions they talk of it, with disappointment, with apprehensions, with irritation, and even with disgust. All of this must not be unjustified. There must be something very seriously wrong somewhere.

On the face of it, however, our universities do not seem to be lacking in anything. They have most highly qualified staff, majority of them with foreign degrees, mostly PhDs. Standard-publications and research work are demanded from them and they do produce these when required to do so. The universities are not lacking in talent and capacity, and huge sums are spent on their maintenance and advancement. Still the standards are falling down. Various causes have been suggested for this deterioration and remedies offered which have been sometimes practically applied. But there seems to be no improvement in the situation.

After long debates and exhaustive discussions the situation may now be summed up precisely in three definite propositions, viz., 1. there is lack of co-ordination between research and teaching; 2. there is no sense of personal responsibility and no accountability; and 3. the gap between the B.A. and M.A. syllabi and teaching methods necessitates more emphasis on teaching than on research. Let us take up these propositions one by one.

Most of the research now done by our scholars in foreign universities is either irrelevant or even inimical to our national interests. There is no proper planning or specific programme for research in our country. The Government and the university are equally indifferent to what field of research a scholar may choose and what may be its relevance to our national requirements. On the individual level the only objective before our scholars is primarily careerism. They are not to blame for it, since the policy here is that a Ph.D. is recognised and its validity is not questioned. In the developed countries research is directly related to industry, and in the majority of cases it is the industry that sponsors research and gives the projects to a university. We have neither the industry of the developed world, nor its problems. Our industry is at a stage where it needs no original research. It finds foreign expertise quite sufficient, which comes to it with the import of a particular equipment. Consequently, a scholar who has done some valuable research abroad, finds himself useless in his own country where neither those problems exist on which he has worked nor does he ever again see the apparatus on which he conducted his research. Some scholars, however, manage to import the apparatus on which they have worked. But it lies idle and is ultimately wasted since there is no project or programme in the country which may utilise it. Excerpts from two papers of Prof. John Ziman, F.R.S. are to the point here:--

‘.....students go abroad to study for advanced degrees, and bring back with them whatever speciality they happen to have acquired. This is most likely to be highly “academic” subject – that is, something directly related to the central themes of the discipline. In physics, for example, our proper emphasis on the fundamental nature of atomic and nuclear physics in under-graduate courses fires the imagination of students from developing countries who, in their immaturity, have no grasp of the enormous range of special fields where these basic principles are in fact applied. Their knowledge of the science as a whole is so

distorted and romantic that they are quite incompetent to make a proper choice at this stage’.

The other excerpt makes a more direct comment:

‘Now how do these promising young “scientists” arise? They struggle through secondary schools where science- is taught as a sort of mysterious doctrine, with little contact with experimental hard fact. They work their way through a university curriculum in physics or chemistry, dutifully learning to describe a Feby-Perot etalon or to identify the terms in the empirical formula for nuclear binding energy. They are told nothing about why it rains, how a motorcar works, nor why glass is brittle; but being very diligent and very intelligent they pass their examinations with honours and win a scholarship to study abroad.

‘Our contact with such students begins with a letter from the British Council requesting a place for a graduate student from Paradisia to take a PhD. in ebullitiogenesis. Graciously, he is welcomed to the team, and made pretty much at home. He is given a research problem and after three or four years he returns home as a fully qualified ebullitionist. Or, when he arrives, he explains that his real ambition is to be a theoretician and, in due course, he graduates in micro cosmology with several joint papers with his distinguished supervisor.

‘We know perfectly well that experimental facilities in the physics department of the university of Paradisia are quite inadequate for meaningful research in ebullitiogenesis. We know the fate by intellectual starvation of an isolated lecturer in theoretical micro-cosmology in a country where even “Physical Review Telegrams” arrives six months late. In fact, our main contribution to the laudable aspiration of the World Plan of Action is usually to put our brilliant former

student in touch with a colleague who can give him a permanent academic job in Europe or America’.

Thus ‘the embellishment’ either results in talent wastage or at best, in brain drain. No wonder, then, that we see so many frustrated, disgruntled, and sadistic scholars around us in this country. This very largely affects academic standards.

The situation is still worse in Humanities where academic work is generally motivated by national or political ideologies. For example, about the impact of imperialism on the colonies there will be a British approach, an American approach, and a Pakistani approach. Our students going abroad need a degree, and if their research in any way appeals to their supervisors they find it easier to get a Ph.D. If their thesis in some way flatters their host nation they even get a good offer from a publisher. A good degree, with respectable published work, is a great distinction. But nobody in this country, unfortunately, bothers about the nature of work, some of which may be even inimical to our national ideology. It is not unusual to meet scholars here who are very apologetic about their work, and are sometimes very sorry about it. They find it embarrassing to talk of it to their colleagues and to their students. This, too, affects academic standards.

As a result of such irrelevant or unpatriotic work these scholars take an academic stance of high scholarship and erect around them a defensive wall of pedantic snobbery and reinforce* their isolation. They would act highbrow, scornfully declining to enter into any discussion with men of inferior intellects and accomplishments. They will write only in journals that no one reads, but which, being of ‘international repute’, not only satisfy their ego, but also add to their qualifications. They would, for instance, reject an article published in The Pakistan Times as trash. Does it not sound ridiculous that an article in the Pakistan times, which the scholars also read, should be ignored and all the weightage given to a journal which even their subscribers do not read. It should not be surprising that many scientists here will read

Prof. Ziman's remarks (quoted above) for the first time in the Pakistan Times, though these were published in reputed journals and their reprints were generously distributed. Quality is sacrificed to the titles. The scholars prefer to erect their ivory towers in the world of today. This pedantic snobbery which isolates the academician from practical life is symptomatic of our wrong emphasis on education. It is not only an offspring of this ill planning, but also circumscribes it and thus creates a vicious circle of wrong policies creating wrong scholars who devise wrong policies.

As for pure research, it should be encouraged not as a rule but as an exception, keeping in view our national needs and limited resources. Only in very special cases for very genuine researchers pure research should be encouraged, because without it applied research will not be possible. But pure research as an aesthetic activity must be disallowed outright. Some apologists claim that research is a training. The relevance or otherwise of a particular topic of research leading to a Ph.D. does not matter. All right. But does anyone bother to know what they make of this training. When you ask them about their qualifications they say they have a Ph.D. But when you question them about their subject, they say it is a training. They are not themselves sure whether they are really qualified, or only qualified to work. This also affects academic standards.

This lack of co-ordination between research and teaching has been carried too far by the university by opening separate research institutes. This is an anomaly. On the one hand, it means that our teaching departments are not competent to undertake research. On the other hand, research is expected from the teachers whose promotion depends not on teaching, the only work they do, but on research, which they are not supposed to do. Then, the research departments have their own publications while the teaching departments have none. The result is that if the teachers concentrate on teaching, they cannot do research work because, first of all, they have to finish the course. Then, they have to prepare their lectures, which itself is a research work. One lecture means one research paper.

A thesis has to be made, relevant data is collected, and the thesis is established through illustrations and comparisons. If he takes up a research assignment, it may be very different from his teaching assignment. Thus sailing in two boats, he will end up either with a poor lecture or a poor research. If the research and teaching are co-ordinated no such situation will arise, since his teaching will suggest topics of research to the teacher, and his research will make his lectures profound and authentic. The lecturer will be then a real teacher, a scholar and a researcher. He will work hard and publish the fruits of his labour. Every teaching department must have its own journal. It is a shame to have none.

The second main cause of deterioration in the academic standards is the indifference, apathy and escapism of the senior scholars. There is no sense of personal responsibility, no commitment, a no accountability. Everybody tries to push the burden to somebody else's shoulder. It may be said, and with some justification, that the Professors have been incapacitated by the high-handed administration, that a system has been devised in which the teacher gets all the blame. But the fact is that a ridiculous "situation has been created in which the Universities are run by clerks, and the Professors, unfortunately, submit with acquiescence to clerical authority. No irony is intended here. It is the hardest fact. Take, for example, the case of admissions to the university. The academic standards will very much depend on the kind of stuff we admit in the university. Facts and experience over the years confirm that the B.A. B.Sc. results are not a good criterion to assess the talent of a candidate since there is such a gap in the undergraduate and post-graduate curricula, in their methods of teaching and in the approach to a subject. In the past the university departments gave admission tests to candidates and thoroughly interviewed them. Now the merit system has been introduced, in which the office prepares the merit list, on the basis of B.A. results, and the Professor signs the admission notice. The chairman of the department is rather happy that he has been relieved of a difficult duty. The choice of deserving

candidates means a lot of hard work, a firm power of decision and an unshakeable sense of duty. It requires confidence in one's own decision, and integrity in the eyes of others. Confidence and integrity have both been surrendered to clerical convenience.

A similar situation exists with regard to the promotion of teachers in the university. The requirements are all mechanical and the provision of a selection board is hardly more than a mere formality. For the post of a Professor for example, a candidate has to be a Ph.D. with 15 years of service or an M.A. with 18 years of service, with eight publications in journals of 'international repute' What is needed is a degree, length of service, and a list of journals. A clerk puts the required ticks. The quality of any of these is not questioned. One having served for eighteen years might have not taken a single class or delivered a single lecture. He is at par with one who has never missed a class. Then his qualifications and performance as a teacher do not count at all. As for a Ph.D., we have already discussed its implications above. And for the publications, the names of journals are enough, whatever is contained in them is nobody's concern. There is an anecdote current in the university that a teacher demanded an increment on the basis of a contribution to a publication of a very high international repute. It was later revealed that the contribution was the longitude and latitude of Lahore. Also, a journal of international repute, in practical terms, generally means any journal published outside Pakistan. The journals published in foreign countries have their own priorities which may not be very relevant in our context. Such a mechanical procedure of selection discourages the selectors also who lose all interest in their job and become apathetic and ultimately callous in their attitude. In a society where the integrity of the most highly educated is doubted and where the Professor is either allowed **no** initiative or fears taking an independent decision, any talk of academic standards is a purely academic exercise, at best. Consequently, senior teachers take little interest in teaching and are all the time pursuing administrative assignments. As a

matter of fact, it is the senior teachers that set the tone of a department. It is they who provide incentive to the younger teachers. When wrong traditions are set academic standards suffer.

The third main cause of deterioration in academic standards is the big gap between undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Our graduates have a very superficial idea of the subjects they study for their degree examination. Consequently, when they come to the university they need a thorough study of their subject right from its fundamentals. Therefore, primarily we need teachers rather than research scholars at this stage. Teaching being ignored, as at present, the teachers do not find much advantage in concentrating on teaching, except for an isolated case or two here and there where teaching is done for purely aesthetic satisfaction. Perhaps this is the only consolation left to the teacher. One good solution was the introduction of Honours classes. Unfortunately the scheme never gained any popularity in this university.

For better academic standards, then, teaching should be given due importance, and Professors in the university should be encouraged to become better teachers. This is more important in the present conditions than publishing a research paper. Research, no doubt, is very important. But we must correct our priorities. Good teaching should be duly emphasised and adequately rewarded. One way of doing it is to give equal weightage to research and teaching while assessing a teacher's case for promotion. Without good teaching there will be no good students and consequently no good research, and the standards will only deteriorate.

❧ Chapter 02 ❧

Higher Education



Much concern has been shown over the years about the state of education, particularly of higher education, in Pakistan. There have been debates, seminars and symposia, but no improvement has resulted. We hear a lot of deterioration in the educational standards. Even the extent and nature of this deterioration has not yet been established. The reason is that different issues have been confused and there is no clear idea of the real problem. There are two basic issues, which, though very different, are usually mixed up. There is the question of deterioration of academic standards within the present system of education. It is quite a different matter whether the present system of education is yielding the results which we as a nation aspire to achieve. What generally happens is that while talking of one problem we find ourselves discussing the other, and so keep shuttling our thoughts between the two issues, finally coming out with no clear idea of either.

So far as the present system of education is concerned, it will be very difficult to establish that any deterioration has taken place at any level. Quantitatively as well as qualitatively there has been a marked improvement and a clear advance. There has been a manifold increase in the number of educational institutions of all categories. Thousands of primary schools have been opened. The number of High Schools and Colleges has proportionately increased. For one university in 1947 we have over two dozens now. Technical institutes have registered a similar increase in numbers. Education is perhaps

one field where growth rate has been much higher than the rate of the growth of population. If the population has doubled in the last 30 years, higher education has registered a more than tenfold increase. Thus, quantitatively there has been tremendous and unprecedented advancement.

Quantity is an important factor in the determination of quality. Quantity yields quality. Let us first see quality in concrete terms. Where at one time the young students had to walk for miles to attend a school, most of the people now find education at their doorsteps. Where previously there was hardly a primary school now we may see a degree college. The number of qualified teachers has also increased. Majority of school teachers are now properly trained. We have much better qualified teachers in the colleges. The staff is less scarce and better equipped. Those who had 3rd classes in the M.As. have improved the division, or are trying to do so. Above everything else they have got a rich and vast experience of teaching over the years to their credit. The number of foreign qualified teachers has increased. The older generation keeps harping on the deterioration theme. This is their privilege in a society that still respects age. But facts cannot be denied. There are more libraries, more laboratories, more research journals, more scholarly magazines now than there were 30 years ago. It is unfair to compare the best of one generation with the worst of the other. The average teacher as well as the average student of today compares not too unfavourably with his seniors in academics as well as in his level of social awareness. The role of mass communication media, such as TV., Radio and the Press cannot be ignored. At least these facilities were not available to the seniors.

There is the fallacy of comparing the matriculate or the graduate of to-day with the graduates or matriculates of 1947. Obviously one major factor in training that of practical experience, is ignored. After matriculation a young man joins

an office and starts dealing with its routine work. This routine work is limited to a restricted vocabulary and a narrow orbit of experience. The young man observes and practices the routine and over a couple of years masters the technique. Consequently, one who has been associated with the routine work for some time will become an adept in it and his performance will be naturally much better than that of a novice in the job. Specific jobs require specific training. There is hardly such a thing as ability in the abstract or training in the abstract. It is generally assumed that a graduate will be more capable than a matriculate. But if both have not been trained for a specific job both will be incapable of doing it. Capability is always specific and applied. Our concepts of capability are degree or certificate ridden whereas on-job training is all that matters. This must be clearly borne in the mind since higher education too is not a capability in the abstract. This is a specialised qualification. We often hear jokes that some graduate could not prepare a draft which a matriculate, trained in the job, easily did. Sometimes people will ridicule an M.A. for being ignorant of a science term or a Doctor in a Science subject for his lack of religious knowledge. A scholar in a foreign country will refuse to speak on any topic outside his field of specialization and will not be ashamed of it. He considers all capability specific and limited. We have the notion of abstract capability. There is no reason why a matriculate cannot be as good an administrator as a graduate or an M.A. If we want to promote higher education because we need good civil servant, we are wasting our time and resources. This is one major drawback of our present system of education that it emphasises abstract knowledge and ignores the practical and applied side of it.

However, we have used the present system to its limit, and even beyond. In the given situation, whatever could be done has been done. Educational institutions have been opened, teachers appointed and facilities provided. Research is

encouraged, scholarly journals are published, libraries extended and improved, and the teachers have been given better salaries. The government is spending much more on education than it ever did. But the results have not been satisfactory. Within the present system only some more money can be invested. But the system is not capable of yielding more than it has done.

The problem therefore is the present system of education. That is why in our society everyone blames everyone else for deterioration in education. The parents blame teachers, the teachers blame students, and the students shift the entire blame to society. No one is really to blame, not even the present system of education, which is doing all that it was framed to do. If it does not fulfil our aspirations, it was not made to do so. Our needs as an independent nation are to feed our millions, providing them the basic amenities of life, and training them in a manner which will promote our interests in the highly competitive world of today — interests which are material as well as academic. These should be the goals of any national policy of education. The present system of education was introduced by our colonial masters neither to promote our economic interests nor to encourage any scholarly pursuits. It provides just one more pastime to the leisurely class. Like hunting or a game of chess, going to a college or a university was a sophisticated hobby. At a more serious level a college or a university was taken as a finishing school which just added another plume to the cap.

The one prominent feature of our present system of education is its lack of any relevance to the existing conditions of life. One educated in this system is not capable of any practical pursuits. Consequently the problem of the educated unemployed who seek white-collared jobs, which are ever so scantily available. We go on doling out education to all who can secure it irrespective of what they would gain from it or

how the nation will benefit from it. We see even engineers and doctors seeking administrative jobs and M.As. in Political Science, Philosophy or Islamiyat working in commercial organizations. A degree does not ensure any practical capability. On the other hand, even scholarship is not normally encouraged or in any sense forwarded.

Our present system of education is not designed to promote scholarship. Rather it is impossible to pursue any scholarship in this system. It will be more correct to say that it kills all desire for knowledge. This system only promotes mediocrities. The one big problem at the post-graduate level is that the students come here with practically no background of the subject. The academic standard as well the nature of instruction at the post-graduate level have no relation to the education imparted at the undergraduate level. The courses taught and the reading habits promoted are very different at the two stages. Neither the teachers nor the students are to blame for poor academic performance. For the B.A. examination a student has to prepare four subjects. As a result he cannot concentrate on any. A teacher also realises how a student is burdened with the other subjects. Consequently both the teacher and the student are forced to confine to the bare minimum of the subject, with the sole purpose of securing good marks in all the subjects. Our system of education produces and promotes jacks of all trades. They have no sound knowledge of any subject and are awarded degrees. That is why our degree is considered equivalent to a school certificate, or even less, in the advanced countries of the world. At the M.A. level, however, our courses are framed in accordance with the syllabi of the best universities of the world. A student in our universities is exposed to serious scholarship for the first time when he joins an MA. class. He is expected to become a scholar overnight. The student has no grasp of the subject and the teacher does not know how to inject it in his head. The consequences are grave. The teacher and the taught are both

frustrated in their effort. The expectations and consequently the standards have to be lowered. Teaching as well as learning become frustrating experiences. Discouraged and disheartened the scholars find the spirit of enquiry stifled within them. The worst happens when they parade their wisdom as pseudo-scholars, No wonder that our seniors in the field, few venerated exceptions apart, have as a rule discouraged any serious pursuit of learning. Sound foundations must be laid at the undergraduate level. The sudden jump from the B.A. to the M.A. level is a Herculean task and so few ever succeed in it.

The worst damage is done by the compulsory subjects, specially on the Humanities side. An average student finds English as the main stumbling block. However proficient one may be in the subject of his choice, he is not eligible to get admission in M.A. in his subject, it may even be Persian, Arabic or Urdu, unless he manages to pass the examination in English, without which he cannot get a B.A. degree. Most of the students most of the time find themselves struggling with English which ultimately turns out to be a wasteful effort even if they scrape through the examination. Genuine scholars with inadequate English, drop out while mediocre students with a little luck in English get the opportunity of pursuing higher education.

The problem of English at the B.A. level has been a subject for debate for some time. There is a general feeling that the cause of education is badly suffering due to compulsory English. But at the same time nobody is prepared to do away with English. Even our most ardent patriots and orientalists are compelled to send their children to English medium schools. The reasons for sticking to this colonial heritage are so many and have been discussed so often. The result is an unfortunate dilemma in which the nation would neither retain English nor give it up. A compromise is struck in the name of Functional English. Now, this concept of Functional English has become a

stock fallacy of our educationists. The very meaning of Functional has been rather blurred. It has been practically reduced to mean only the rules of grammar. In fact English is being taught at the B.A. level (and it has been so for years) only as Functional English. It has been clearly mentioned in the syllabi that no literary or critical questions will be asked in the examination. The courses in English have been introduced as exercises in comprehension. Narration of events, description of characters and bare summaries of the texts is all that is required in the subject of English in the BA. examination. Obviously, grammar cannot be taught year after year, from the Primary school to the Degree college. Some practical knowledge of the use of language is essential. Literature is the best specimen of the applied use of language. Drama, fiction, essay and poetry are the best product of the highest accomplishment of a language. Also, there? is an argument that some liberal and socially useful education is possible through the teaching of good pieces of English literature. It will, therefore, be worthwhile that, making a concession to national inertia in this respect, and in the name of widening of intellectual horizons, English be retained as a compulsory subject, but for the sake of academic standards, its syllabus is not further reduced. However, in the larger interest of scholarship, it should not be necessary to pass in English in order to get the B.A. degree. For pursuing higher education in certain specific fields, however, a condition may be laid that the candidate must have passed in the subject of English. In other disciplines it should not be made an unnecessary disqualification.

We are living in a competitive world in which our educational efforts should not only be related to our national needs, these should also compare well with the standards of education in other countries of the world. We need a lot of research work in order to determine our national needs. For instance, our education should give the students a clear national point of view on various subjects, such as History,

Political Science, Economics, Philosophy and Literature. We must study these subjects from a Pakistani point of view. When we read books written by foreign authors we immediately feel that their approach to the various subjects is not the same as ours. This is a generally observed reaction. But it is vague and usually takes the form of prejudice. Serious research work is needed to analyse this prejudice and to give a concrete statement of our national point of view. In order to undertake this research work, which will be a monumental task, we must produce good scholars.

In order to acquire this scholarship and in order to favourably compete with other nations we must first of all discard a system of education which is solely designed to curb and discourage scholarship. No advanced country of the world has such an education system. Even in their own country the colonial master had a very different system of education. In the British universities only one subject is taught in B.A. and the duration is generally 3 years. Only one subject is taught in the B.A. in all the universities of repute in the world. But in our universities practically no subject is taught upto the B.A. level. We also need a system which starts preparing the scholars from the school age and takes them to specialization towards the end of the B.A. At present there is too much wastage and duplication of work. Education seems to be non-serious and directionless. For the High School examination, for example, a candidate takes up 5 compulsory subjects: English, Urdu, Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies and General Science. Then there are 3 elective subjects, which may be Islamic Studies, Civics and Economics. Now, with a little imagination the syllabus for 3 compulsory subjects of Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies and General Science can be easily inserted in the books prepared for the compulsory subjects of English and Urdu. The students can thus be spared at least the burden of 3 compulsory subjects in place of which they may be made to concentrate more on the main subjects that they choose to study in the higher classes,

The main subjects are now somewhat seriously taken up for the first time at the Intermediate level. The reason is that even good matriculates find the Intermediate very difficult. Also, education at the High School is so general and vague that, perhaps except for those who take up pre-engineering or pre-medical courses, no one has the faintest idea of what he is going to make of his education. This uncertainty and vagueness extends right upto the degree level. Then suddenly a student is required to choose a subject for the M.A. Since he has not been prepared for anything in particular, he studies any subject in which he is lucky enough to secure admission. Thus, students simultaneously apply for admission to such different subjects as English, Islamiyat, Economics, Philosophy, Persian and Mathematics. It is mockery of education.

It will be fruitful to end all generalist education at the High School. Even here, at the Matriculation level, education for a student must take a direction so that he seriously Starts pursuing a course of study which he may carry to completion at the B.A. or M.A. level. At the Intermediate level only essential subjects leading to some specific goal be given proper emphasis while generalist knowledge be confined to the subjects of Urdu and English in which topics on various subjects may be introduced as part of the text. In the B.A. the students must do only one subject, as is the practice in the universities the world over. In M.A. a specialised branch of the subject should be the main pursuit.

One big drawback of the present system of education is that very few seek higher education with any scholarly intention. Most of the students get admission in higher classes only because they have nothing else to do. Arbitrary restriction on higher education may be very harmful, since in that case only those having better opportunity and better luck will succeed in getting admission to higher classes while the genuine but unlucky or poor scholars will find doors of higher

education closed on them. In order to avoid this wasteful activity and unnecessary expenditure it will be advisable to make High School or at the most Intermediate certificate as the basic qualification for entering any profession. They can make good officers and administrators if properly trained for their jobs. If after the Intermediate young men make good doctors, engineers or army officers, they can also make good civil servants. B.A. or M.A. is good only for those who would take up a teaching career or pursue serious research work in their specific fields. Those who are not interested in higher academic pursuits may thus be spared the ordeal of an uninteresting and pointless higher education.



Chapter 03

Higher Education with a Purpose



One of the most serious problems with our higher education is the unfortunate imbalance in the emphasis given to different branches of academic discipline. These problems can be broadly identified as:--

- (i) Relative significance accorded to education and research within the same discipline;
- (ii) Preferential treatment given to certain disciplines over the others; and
- (iii) The relationship between pursuit of disinterested knowledge and service to community.

The seats of higher learning exist to disseminate knowledge and extend the frontiers of knowledge. Teaching serves the first objective. It aims at transmitting to the younger minds the available knowledge. It is of great significance in education since any further advance is possible only when whatever is already known is fully grasped. It is only after the acquisition of the available information that the need, and even justification, for further investigation and exploration arises. This requires the availability of the fundamental sources of knowledge, such as the latest published information in any field of academic study.

Well-equipped and up-to-date libraries are the one major source of such information. These libraries should have sufficient funds at their disposal. There is also the need of an inter-library service to facilitate the maximum use of reading material scattered at various places. These libraries must be

properly catalogued, and it should be assured that a book shown in the catalogue is available to the reader within a reasonable time, may be a month, if it is already issued to someone else. Books in frequent demand must be available in sufficient numbers. The use of duplicating machines as frequently and conveniently as possible should be encouraged. The best system of lending a book is to replace it on the shelf with its dummy. The dummy showing the name of the borrower and the date of issue will ensure the availability of the book to the new borrower after the specified time limit.

It will not be news to the users of libraries that in most of the cases important books mentioned in the catalogue are never available in the library. One can imagine the frustration of a student who gets stuck in his serious work for want of as little as just a single reference. In all the libraries of Lahore, for example, Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* could not be found, even through best public relationing.

Besides the books, there are the journals and periodicals which provide day-to-day information about the state of knowledge in various fields. These are published by the thousands in about all the countries of the world. Even our best libraries do not subscribe to more than just a handful of these.

Beyond the books and the journals, there is the use of slides, recorded cassettes and micro-films, which is almost non-existent in this country where almost every other house boasts of a VCR. Even the conventional libraries are very insufficiently provided. In a seat of higher learning a library must provide up-to-date information. How many of our hundreds, rather thousands, of teachers of post-graduate classes can tell what new books have been published in their respective fields of study within the last five years? In our present system of education they do not need it, and are not required to know it.

The teachers are easily charged with incompetence and apathy, but they are not asked to fulfil such expectations. For

one thing, our syllabi are miserably out-dated. It has almost become a cliché to say that in the subjects of science we teach, not science, but the history of science. If the syllabus is brought up-to-date, the teacher will face a challenge and will try to come up to it. It is not unknown that our students give good performances when studying abroad. The backwardness of our syllabi can be judged from the fact that a teacher who has done an Honours Course from Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard finds almost ninety per cent of his study of no application in the universities in our country. He manages to forget all that in the course of time. Otherwise, if he has developed some interest in the study, he feels extremely frustrated and disillusioned.

Our system of education is heavily curricular. The University is absolutely cut off from life to the extent that even when an opportunity of contact with the outside world is provided, the scholars cannot benefit from it. Even a study tour is converted into an excursion. In our universities the students of literature find it sufficient to 'read' drama. A drama is a thing to be acted on the stage and to be seen acted. But our students of literature hardly see a play staged, not to mention the need to stage a play. Similarly, despite so much emphasis on the teaching of English, the universities do not have a linguistic lab. The films are no part of academic activity. We still seem to have a prejudice against films, stage and other cultural activity, seeing only corruption and vulgarity in them.

In the so-called 'developing' countries, such as ours, it is still more important and useful to acquire the available information, since we are far behind the advanced countries of the world in this respect. But unfortunately our teachers tend to take the benefit of the doubt under the cover of an education policy that encourages obscurantism. We have, for instance, not yet evolved a mechanism for the assessment of the quality of teaching. Even regular class work is not earnestly emphasised. The situation in practice is worse still. Not only are the teachers not faced with any accountability, even the students do not bother about attendance, and the universities

hardly send down any student for irregularity in attendance. One obvious instance is the case of those students who hold various Union offices. They are generally associated with the university administration at different levels and are represented on many decision making bodies. These bodies generally meet during working hours, and the students represented there cannot attend classes. This irresponsible attitude towards class attendance has spread like an epidemic, and is a major cause of general apathy towards academics. Consequently the teachers see the futility of their endeavours and are convinced that teaching brings no credit.

In the case of appointments and promotions of teachers in the universities the sole considerations are academic qualification, length of service and publications. There is no column in the application forms relating to teaching ability. No mention of it is made in the reference to the experts who are required to give their views about the suitability of a teacher for appointment in the university. No teacher bothers, consequently, about teaching.. They concentrate on publishing articles in order to qualify for promotions. The quality of teaching thus suffers.

The 'research' is also not always genuine. The criteria for the assessment of research are unacademic. The work that is accepted as research is only that which has been published in 'a Journal of International Repute', and 'a Journal of International Repute' is not defined, leaving the administration to make any arbitrary choice in this matter. Any journal published outside Pakistan is invariably accepted as a journal of international repute. While within the country it depends on the personal efforts or resources of the teachers concerned to get a journal recognised as a journal of international repute. Consequently, anything published in the journals is accepted as a work of research, whatever its academic merit otherwise. We have no definition of what is a work of research. Thus research activity for teachers seeking promotions becomes as dubious as

teaching ability although it counts towards appointments and promotions in the university.

Research-teaching relationship is otherwise very complicated in the modern world. Research in science is directly related to production, and in the 'developing' countries where all industry is established under foreign guidance there is hardly any room for research. When no technology originates in the country, no research is required. As for basic or pure research, it is a luxury in such circumstances.

The emphasis on the teaching of science in the universities of the Third World is miserably ill-conceived. The fallacy is caused by confusing science with technology. The developing countries of the world surely need to acquire technology at a faster rate, since the world has gone far ahead of us in this field. But science is not technology. Like the layman, sometimes even very knowledgeable persons tend to believe that more science means more technology, that if we develop the Physics Department, we will be able to make the Atomic Bomb, or will have a space programme. Now nuclear weapons or space flights are no more science. These are already technology, like automobile engineering or aeronautic technology requiring merely the skill to operate the machines. We need engineers and mechanics, not scientists. We wish to turn our universities into workshops, and hope to do it by diverting funds to the study of science.

Universities are seats of higher learning, though the concept of specialised universities is also becoming popular, and we have universities of technology or agriculture. Apart from this, a University, by the very definition of the term, is a place of learning about 'all existing things'. We obviously need more technology, which is applied science. But at the same time we need applied knowledge in other branches of learning as well. There is a general misconception that only natural sciences are useful knowledge, whereas History or Sociology are mere intellectual luxuries, and Philosophy or Literature no

more than hobbies or pastimes. Without going into debate about the utilitarian concept of knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge for enlightenment, one thing must be emphasised; that knowledge is rooted in practice, and in turn, guides practice; that, in other words, all knowledge is derived from actual experience of living, and, further, that all knowledge ultimately aims at improving the quality of living. Knowledge divorced from reality, from practice, is suspect. The natural sciences are directly related to actual living, so are other branches of knowledge. It will be wrong to believe that only natural sciences are productive, or require serious education and research. All disciplines in education are equally oriented towards research and production, and a university should put equal emphasis on these activities in all the disciplines, for the development of a mature, comprehensive and balanced society. The following table shows the relevance of various activities in different disciplines:

Discipline	Education	Research	Production
Natural Science	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Mathematics, etc.	Investigations and discoveries	Industrial research, evaluation, field testing, etc.
Natural Sciences	Economics, History, Physical Science, Sociology, etc.	Human Behaviour, Labour relations, Technology options, Impact of technology, Political theory, etc.	Planning, case studies, Rural Reconstruction, social tare.

Humanities	Literature, Liberal arts, Languages, Philosophy, Fine Arts, etc.	Creation & Composition, Analysis, Interpretation.	Books, Journals, Drama, Films, Journalism, Cultural activities, Restoration.
Medicine & Engineering	Engineering & Technology, Biology, Medicine & Surgery.	New discoveries	Industry, Hospitals.

The imbalance in our system of education is quite obvious from this table. While we spend millions on the production of engineers and doctors, and invest billions in industry and hospitals, much less is invested in production of a natural scientist. The Humanities and 5 Sciences exist virtually on the spill-over from these other disciplines. Any amount of money may be spent on buildings, laboratories and workshops, but there is hardly any effort to develop drama and film, or to put proper emphasis on cultural activities. Even Journalism, which is now such a practical and productive science, hardly exists as a respectable discipline in our Universities. Studies in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences are merely confined to bookish knowledge. This is all due to lack of proper emphasis on these branches of learning. And emphasis means proper planning, defining of objectives, and availability of funds. Studies in History, Political Science, Language and Literature, the Fine Arts and, of course, Economics are playing a great role in changing the life of man in the present world, almost as effectively as the natural sciences. In all the advanced countries of the world there is now felt a growing need for the balanced growth of a university by putting equal emphasis on different disciplines. All these studies require as much field

work and as much extra-curricular activity as the natural sciences.

Technology does bring immediate profit by exploiting the material resources for production. But education of a man is no less rewarding, only the reward is not immediately visible. Improving and extending man's power over the universe is not enough. Man must also be properly educated and cultivated. Man's attitude and the working of the institutions created by him, deserve as much attention as the betterment of his material interests and his control of the environment. This brings us to the question of inter-disciplinary activities in the universities. A university basically exists for the community, and it must serve the community. Our universities, on the other hand are so designed that they alienate the students and the teachers, from the community. The society has a right to the universities because public money is being spent on their establishment and smooth functioning. But the question has never been satisfactorily answered, and can never be, under the existing conditions. The emphasis in our universities is on education and research in the abstract. We hardly have what in most reputed universities of the world is described as 'extension' activities. A case was made for such activities by the present author. It was captioned, *Our Educational Needs and Aspirations* and is included in his volume. In that article a scheme was proposed which linked education and research with production. School education was provided with vocational training programmes which were to be undertaken in actual market conditions. At the college and university levels, too, new courses with vocational bias were proposed. The university must exist not only as a seat of learning and pursuit of higher knowledge but also function as a guide and partner in national development. This kind of university-community relationship is very important for the development of higher education on healthy, progressive and productive lines. The graduates will thus become more employable and will have a better understanding of the socio-economic and

political conditions prevailing in the country, and will be in a better position to help the productive sector. Moreover, a direct contact with actual working conditions will improve the academic atmosphere.

Technically there does exist such a relationship between the university and the community through public representation on the various bodies of the university, such as, the Senate and the Syndicate. But these bodies meet so rarely, and when they do meet, there is such a backlog of accumulated work that most of their time is consumed in passing the budget or making appointments, or doing some other routine work. There hardly exists a tradition of healthy deliberations about the academic activities of the university in these bodies.

The university can have a meaningful dialogue with the community only if it is first organized as a comprehensive system with all its organs existing in appropriate balance. Internal harmony of a university is a pre-requisite for its liaison with the community. This necessitates the establishment and development of inter-disciplinary activities in the university, since the community is not so much interested in its professional insights.

In our universities, inter-disciplinary activity hardly exists. Attempts at creating such an activity are directly discouraged. In the ever-increasing complexities of the modern world there is an ever-growing need of close co-ordination between various branches of knowledge. Research in science is no more an individual affair. Already hundreds of scientists participate in a single research project in the huge laboratories of the world. Experts from different disciplines pool their talents and resources to undertake a work of research. We find no such activities in our universities where scientists from different departments work on a joint venture. In the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences the situation is much more dismal. There exists no coordination between education and research within the same department. Besides, production is no concept in our educational set-up.

Most of the universities in the world, particularly in the advanced countries, work in close co-operation with the production centres. 'The National Commission for Research' in the USA, for example, recommended in 1978 that "It is time to explore new ways for these two segments of society (university and industry) to produce synergistic results through programmes of co-operative research." Moreover, the term 'Production' is no more confined to industry alone. It is now generally understood "to imply not only the production of material goods, but also intellectual work and services related to government and community activities." This kind of activity is possible only through the establishment of inter-disciplinary projects or creating societies in the university to undertake such programmes. Only then will the universities be able to develop close cooperation in the fields of humanistic and social and natural sciences with "Government and Production Centres for economic planning media utilisation, case studies, sociological studies on technology transfer, etc. Only then would be developed multi-disciplinary problem – solving" that would involve social scientists, natural scientists and technologists. It is in the seats of higher learning that we have a rich and varied available pool of economic, social and human resources and it is through this potential that not only national development can be genuinely assured, but even projects of larger human interest can be undertaken on international level. Societies can be established in the universities on the lines of UNESCO to create inter-disciplinary projects which may work for larger human good.

Measures must, however, be taken to ensure that a shift in educational emphasis from knowledge for scholarship to knowledge for utilitarian purposes may not result in the narrowing of the intellectual horizon of the students. In some of our universities it has been provided in the form of Centres of Excellence in natural sciences. These serve the dual purpose of providing advance research and co-ordination of higher research in various fields. It is also expected that with growth

and extension these centres may develop into institutes of inter-disciplinary research and higher education. No such centres, however, seem to exist in the faculties of humanities and social sciences. The University Grants Commission must consider establishing such Centres of Excellence in the subjects of Arts which may undertake broad-based research and co-ordinated education with a multi-dimensional syllabus.

Finally, there is the problem of creating a balance between the development of natural and human resources. While in the modern world it has become inevitable for a common man to acquire some technical skill needed in the handling of the machinery of daily use, it must also be realised that a scientist also needs at least as much humanistic training and cultivation. If some importance had been given to the education of humanities and social sciences in balance with the study of natural sciences humanity would have been spared much of the tragedy of the modern age. A great cause of this tragedy is the unequal development of these two sectors of education. Human development has miserably lagged behind the development of human control of the environment. Man's control of nature is fabulous, but hunger, sickness and oppression prevail. Atomic Energy would have gone into human service and not converted into Atomic Bomb in a humanistic society. While we are developing all sorts of machines, we must also develop man. And this requires greater effort and diverting of much bigger resources to the humanities. This branch of knowledge has been left far behind and needs to catch up with human advances in other fields.

❧ Chapter 04 ❧

The Semester System: A Few Suggestions



The semester system has been introduced in various institutions in Pakistan, the latest to adopt it being the Punjab University (1975). The system in this university is only two months old and it is already in serious trouble. The demand of the students is for lowering the grade average for pass marks from 2.5 to 2. But as a matter of fact they are in great confusion, and so are their teachers. Most of them have no clear idea of these grades and credits. They have been, however, alarmed by the information that 2.5 grade average means 67 p.c. marks.

It means that a student getting an average of less than 67 per cent will not qualify for the degree, whereas in the old system only 60 p.c. marks were needed to secure a first division, for which now 86 p.c. marks are required. So far in the university two tests for the first semester, prelim, and mid-term, have been held and the majority of the students are getting less than 50 p.c. marks. They are genuinely perturbed because these awards are final and cannot be improved upon. The lowering of standards in the marking of papers will, however, not solve the problem which is extremely complicated.

The main difficulty is that this change from the comprehensive system to the semester system of examinations has been introduced rather abruptly. No one was prepared for it, and no one had any clear idea of it. When change came no preparation was made and no clear programme was given. The only working paper that was prepared under the instruction of

the authorities was about the mechanics of various tests and examinations. The teachers, majority of whom was unfamiliar with the new system, concentrated exclusively on the examinations. This was the basic mistake and the main cause of confusion.

An education system is not an examination system. Broadly speaking, a system of education consists of three basic factors: the curriculum, the teaching methods, and the evaluation or the examination system. What has happened in the present change over is that the examination system has been radically changed while the curriculum and the teaching practices have been retained from the old system. That is why this problem with the pass marks and marks for securing various divisions. In the previous system 60 p.c. was first class, now it is less than the qualifying marks. Any readjustment of marks in the present system will therefore be purely on arithmetical manipulation. This will be particularly so in subjects like English and History or Economics in which the examiners are now persuaded to give 67 p.c. marks where they previously awarded 33 p.c. pass only. It will not be difficult to see that while in the present change over only the examination system has been changed, efforts are now being made to readjust the new examination system in such a way that it remains substantially the same as in the comprehensive examination system of the earlier days. This was inevitable, since the papers continue to be set according to the old pattern, the courses of studies are also the same as of old, and the teaching method is still the same old lecturing method.

Let us try to understand this business of the syllabus first. In the comprehensive examination system the courses set for an examination were generally taught for two years, and the examination was held at the end of two years. This was the only evaluation made for the award of a degree. If some other terminal or annual examinations were held, these were the internal concern of a department and their results had no bearing on the final examination. Thus a student leisurely

prepared for the final examination for two years. He gradually broadened his studies, acquired a better comprehension of the subject with the passage of time, and improved his writing, his power of expression, and thus came to have a clear idea of the basic concepts of his subject in the course of studies. If he was, for example, required to do Shakespeare, he would pick up Shakespeare's work and Shakespearean criticism at random. After some time he would come to form an opinion about Shakespeare, and develop some point of view about his art. Then he would come back to Shakespeare once again with this new insight. This was possible for him because he had ample time at his disposal. He could safely pursue this method of trial and error. The teacher also helped him in the same manner by letting out suggestions in his lectures about the various aspects of Shakespearean criticism. The system was basically speculative. From the very beginning a student was expected to form his own original opinion on a subject, or a problem. The semester system provides little room for such speculation. Here we have examinations almost every month and other assessments, such as seminars and class discussions, almost every day. All these examinations and assessments carry marks with them which are counted towards the final evaluation for the award of a degree. In the old system a student getting 33 p.c. marks in the first terminal test could improve his performance and end up with 60 p.c. or more in the final examination, thus securing a first class. But in the semester system if he has got third class marks in the first semester and after steadily improving his performance secured first class marks in the last semester, on the average he will end up with a second class at the most. It is therefore obvious that the curriculum for the semester system must be radically different from that prescribed for the comprehensive system. We also know that in the first one month or two a student usually finds it difficult to follow a lecture. He does not even understand the teacher's language. In the semester system he will have two examinations in these two months. Also in the comprehensive system the emphasis is upon cumulative knowledge. Various

theories have a meaning and a significance only when they are studied in relation to one other. The knowledge of only one theory or one approach is extremely insufficient in any subject. One knows Freud only when one knows Jung and Adler and others. In one month no genius can acquire such vast knowledge. Therefore in the semester system the syllabus must be more factual, objective and precise. A comment on an economic theory after a month's study will be very inferior and immature as compared to the comment that will come out of two years' study. Thus commentary and speculation will find very little place in the semester system. There will be more here of fundamental principles, facts and basic technical information. In the case of English literature, for example, in this system, instead of teaching Shakespeare or Milton or Pope it will be appropriate to devote the first semester to the study of the fundamentals of literary criticism, such as the definitions of various terms like metre, rhythm, rhyme, syllable, foot, conceit, simile, metaphor, imagery, tragedy, comedy, satire, novel, short story, etc. At the end of the first month the students should be examined for their Prelim, on these specific topics. In the second month they should be asked to read some texts, a play, and a few poems of a critical theory for the mid-term examination. For the final examination of the first semester they may be taught some theories of literary criticism, such as the historical approach, the Psychological approach, etc. Syllabus for each examination should be so programmed as to finish in a month's time. In this system it will not be difficult for the students to secure even 100 p.c. marks in an examination. Moreover, favouritism and injustices in the award of marks will be eliminated because of the objective nature of tests. Availability of relevant reading material, however, must be fully assured in order to make this system a success.

The teaching method must also be radically changed to suit the semester system. In the old comprehensive system the teacher delivers learned lectures in the class. The entire world is his book and the whole library his reference. The students

also sit in the class as if they are taking a plunge into the vast abysmal sea of knowledge. If the results of your study must appear after a month, then this approach will simply doom you. This system provides little scope for a quest in the unknown. The teacher must therefore change his technique and adjust it to the semester requirements. In the first place he must prepare the programme for a semester in advance and provide each student with a copy of it. Then he must strictly follow this programme. The students should be given specific information and examined precisely on it. There should be nothing unknown or uncertain in the syllabus or the examination paper. Their syllabus should be known to the students and they should be tested on its knowledge.

The semester system, as I understand it, attempts to bring teaching to the status of a science. It insists on providing available knowledge to the student. He may enter into speculation after he has sufficiently studied what has already been done in a subject. Our old system of education demanded originality, speculative interest and application of knowledge from a student. The semester system demands comprehension first. In the old system a student was a genius first and a student afterwards. No wonder we have so many misinformed or ill-informed geniuses around us. The new system aims at producing good students, so that after completing their study they may prove to be good scholars. In the old system they were already scholars, though very few of them ever tried to be good students.

If the semester system is to succeed then it must be implemented wholly and without reservations. With the new examination system, new syllabi must be framed and new teaching methods adopted. A half-hearted, partial implementation of the system will be simply self-defeating.



SECTION – III

Teaching of Literature



❧ Chapter 01 ❧

Teaching English Literature



However, illogical or incredible it may sound, the fact is that the teaching of English literature, as also the manner in which it is taught, has been seriously opposed in Pakistan. Not long ago, a delegation of post-graduate students of English at the University protested that English literature was taught in English in the English Department. Their argument was that other literatures, such as Persian and Arabic, are taught in Urdu. One reason for opposition to it is the incompetence of majority of students in English. But obviously they will not confess to that, and oppose it on patriotic or religious grounds. Still more surprising is the fact that the greatest opposition to the teaching of English literature has come from the English themselves. The British Council has resisted it, and over the years they have refused any assistance to students desiring to pursue higher studies in English literature. They have totally withdrawn all scholarships for Honours, MA, M. Phil, or PhD in English literature, though only a decade or so ago these were available in sufficient numbers. Pakistan Government and the universities have also been advised not to encourage the teaching of English literature in the country. The emphasis has been shifted to the teaching of English Language.

Let us study this two-pronged attack on English literature in some detail while at the same time consider why the study of English literature is important for us.

It is interesting to note that, in the first instance, in Pakistan English literature is pursued for wrong reasons and it is opposed on wrong grounds. A smattering in English

literature has come to be regarded as a point of prestige. Most people would like to have this certificate of status and culture. One proficient in English is supposed to be a man of taste. There is nothing wrong in it as such. We once felt proud of our Persian and Arabic also. A knowledge of Greek, Latin or French is considered to be a mark of distinction in an Englishman. The knowledge of a foreign language in fact suggests wide reading and liberal education. But in Pakistan a knowledge of English, and more particularly of English literature, is no more an individual distinction. The number of people who have some acquaintance with English literature is large enough to form a class. English thus becomes a mark of class distinction. If the study of English literature creates this kind of alienation, the sooner it is given up the better. It is a genuine grievance. But it applies more to English language than to its literature. A mushroom growth of English medium schools is symptomatic of this widespread complex.

The prejudice is not against literature. It is against the class with which it is identified. But talking of class distinctions may lead to unsavoury conclusions. English literature is therefore opposed on patriotic and religious grounds. A bigoted student of English literature once so exasperated a very senior teacher of English that he reprimanded the boy and sternly enquired of him why he had chosen to join a class of M.A. in English. The adamant reply was that he had decided to do M.A. in English because he wanted to prove to the world that one may do M.A. in English and still remain a firm believer and a good Muslim. It is still believed, even by the highly educated here, that the study of English literature makes people irreligious. And this, in spite of the fact that our greatest national heroes like the Quaid-i-Azam, Allama Iqbal and Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar were all thoroughly steeped in English literature, and they were such good Muslims too.

Actually opposition to literature is opposition to knowledge. Some interests feel threatened if there grows a general awareness in the people. That is why they are not

concerned about our folk literatures and are not perturbed if Urdu language and literature are not developed. Then, there are the puritans who will exclude all feeling, all appreciation from life.

English literature is opposed for being liberal and secular. That is, for not being narrowly dogmatic. It promotes independent thinking. It is a literature of the people who have learnt to think scientifically. It fights against dogmatism and challenges all kinds of prejudices. It conducts something like laboratory experiments on situations from real life. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, for example, is a play about a conflict between convention and conscience. Filial obligations are opposed to dictates of justice. Similarly a novel by Jane Austen deals with the complexities of social life. Like Philosophy, Psychology and Economics, literature is also a social science. It also explores, analyses and explains the various phenomena of man's social, emotional and aesthetic life. The fact that English literature is not our literature and does not subscribe to all our values is still more the reason to read it, since we can bring to its study an objectivity of approach which is not so easy to secure while studying our own literature. The liberalism and secularism of English literature may thus better train us for a critical approach to life. A complacent people never prosper. Life must be lived as a challenge.

If Urdu literature is not as advanced, as rich and as mature as English literature, this is no fault of English literature. If Urdu literature does not enjoy the same prestige as English literature, the blame lies on us. Nothing has really been done to promote Urdu language and literature and bring them to the level of other languages and literature of the world. Forty precious years of national life have been wasted in paying hollow compliments to Urdu.

All policies and practices, whether by intention or through default, have been aimed at promoting English. Even the greatest advocates of Urdu send their children to English medium schools. They may not get the whole blame for that,

since there is really no alternative. There are no good Urdu medium schools in the country. No effort has been made either by the government or by private organisations to open Urdu medium schools that could compete with the English medium schools. Also, there is hardly any good literature in Urdu for any level of readers. There are no story books, no science books and practically no books on general knowledge. Whatever little is there is much below standard.

All these factors leave no choice to our children except to go to English literature. They read English fiction, English tales, English legends and English poems. They develop a taste for English which is not satisfied by the available Urdu literature. They are thus drawn to English literature. There is no reason to deny them a higher enjoyment.

Another strong reason for teaching English literature in Pakistan is that it is the only other literature that we know and for the teaching of which we have sufficient resources and facilities. No literature can grow in isolation. English literature prospered because it had Greek and Latin literatures behind it and the French and other European literatures developing alongside with it. It benefited from all of these. English literature shows great indebtedness not only to the classics, but also to the contemporary Russian, Scandinavian, German and Italian literatures. English writers have also borrowed or learnt from Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit as well as from Chinese and Japanese writings.

There was a time when Urdu literature was closely linked with the great classical traditions of Arabic and Persian. But for a century or so the focus has shifted to English, and through it, to the West. Not only the themes of the modern world, as well as those of our own literature, have come from the West, such as, alienation, frustration, nihilism, existentialism, socialism, etc. (earlier it was the English Romantic Movement which had tremendous influence on Urdu literature). Much of the technical innovation has also come from the West. Novel, Drama, Free verse, Prose Poem, Symbolism, etc., all have come

through English literature. The influence of modern Western literature, which has reached us mainly through English, has been so vital that it is practically impossible to appreciate modern Urdu literature without a good idea of the stream of consciousness theory, the method of oblique narration, and the use of montage in poetry and fiction, for instance. Henry James, Conrad, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot are as familiar to us as our own writers.

To accept technology from the West and to reject its aesthetics can create a serious imbalance in our outlook. It is the same mind that develops their technology which works in their literature. The world is already suffering from an imbalance in the emphasis given to natural sciences and humanities. English literature provides us an access to the sensibility of the modern world. Through it we know how industrialisation and the latest advancements in science and technology have affected the psyche of the people of the advanced world.

Science is changing the very “reality” of existence. Our world is hardly the same as the one in which our elders lived. Science and technology are giving birth to a new world, the world that eluded Matthew Arnold. “This brave new world” throws a total challenge and in order to brace up to it one must sharpen all one’s faculties. The social scene is changing very fast. Women are coming out of their cloisters. They are working shoulder to shoulder with men. Old family ties are breaking and new social relationships are developing. The West has passed through many phases of this change in the last three to four hundred years. We have experienced it only recently. A study of their literature can help us in seeing this process of change in a clearer light.

English literature is the product of a scientifically oriented mind. It is not loaded with conventional formalism and eschews euphemism. Urdu writers have already benefited from its precision, analysis and critical acumen. It is in fact so important to us that English criticism has been made a part of

the curriculum for the examination of MA in Urdu. We have hardly any criticism worth the name in Urdu. A scientific tradition of criticism has yet to be developed. The English learnt that from the old master. We must learn it from them. We have a century of education in English literature behind us. We must not sacrifice it to stupid prejudice. We must not also forget that it is through English that we have access to the vast treasure of third world literature which is so dear to us.

Coming now to the language-literature controversy, it is some satisfaction to see that pundits at the language schools have after all started reconsidering their stand on language teaching. There has been no *volte face* though. At least they have reconciled themselves to the eclectic approach of teaching English, tolerating even grammar-translation method which had been once totally discarded, though generations of our elders achieved enviable proficiency in English through this method.

English is neither a foreign language in Pakistan, like Russian, German or French, nor is it a second language, since it is practically the only language of trade, commerce, administration and higher education in the country. A student has to learn English as a compulsory subject throughout his academic career, a privilege that even the national language, Urdu, does not enjoy as it is taught as a compulsory subject only upto the high school level.

These facts were ignored and it was recommended that English should be taught through the direct method and that literature should be totally excluded from the curriculum. The argument was that students learnt stories and summaries by heart, and did not pay any attention to the learning of the language. The fault in fact lay with the crowded classes. It is impossible to teach English to a class of 100 to 150 students.

First in the name of functional English and then in the name of EFL and ESL, the quantum of literature was gradually withdrawn from the syllabi prescribed for the teaching of

English. The result was that the students were given to do only some structural exercises in the language.

Now this kind of teaching can be conducted for a year, or at the most two. Phrase work cannot be spread over fourteen years. Consequently proficiency in English greatly suffered and the standard of English became practically uniform from class 6 to class 14. Just have a look at the scripts of BA examination in English. It will be seen that a candidate failing in English in the BA examination will also surely fail in the examination for class 6.

Teaching of English without literature became a drudgery, with no interest and little profit. Language and literature are not mutually exclusive. One cannot develop, even exist, without the other. Literature is after all the highest excellence of a language. The surest way of learning a language is an exposure to the best in it, which is treasured in its literature.

Thus a misplaced patriotism and a misconceived pedagogy created doubts about the teaching of English literature in Pakistan. It is hoped that these fallacies will not deny our students access to one of the finest and the richest literatures of the modern world any more.



❧ Chapter 02 ❧

Scientific Approach to Literature



The material of science is the world of objective reality, and it proceeds on the basis of available data. But facts are not the reality, in the same way as words are not knowledge, but only dictionary. Reality consists of the relationships in which various facts form themselves, and science studies these relationships. The scientist analyses his material in order to study these relationships and the laws governing these relationships. He tries to discover and describe the pattern of these relationships in the physical world. Similarly the artist deals with the material before him which consists of human relationships. As the laws discovered by science take a practical shape in inventions like steam engines, automobiles, aeroplanes and atomic bombs, similarly the laws discovered by the artist take concrete form in *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Orestes*, *Oedipus*, *Lord Jim*, *The Grecian Urn*, and *Mona Lisa*. A scientific approach to literature, then, would be first of all an objective analysis of the work in question, and then the discovery and the description of relationships in which the writer has put the various aspects of human experience.

The most fundamental thing in the scientific approach is the fact that science moves from the known to the unknown. It does not recognise any *a priori* truths. The only truths accepted by science are those reached through objective observation and experimental verification. Secondly, science accepts no absolutes. The accepted truths of today may prove to be false tomorrow. A scientifically held theory which has been proved wrong does not lose its scientific validity. Dalton's atomic theory and Newton's laws of motion are no longer absolutely

valid. But this does not reduce their scientific significance. On the basis of these three assumptions, viz., Objective study, relative judgement, and progressive development, a student of literature proceeds to study literature scientifically.

Literature is rooted in society, and the objective social reality provides its fundamental data. For a proper appreciation of a piece of literature, it must be placed in its social context. And since society itself is a process, not a static entity, it must be broadly studied in its historical context. Take the example of Shakespeare. His tragedies present two kinds of heroes: egotistical villains, like Richard III, Iago, Edmund, etc., and morally confused and incapacitated heroes given to meditation, like Hamlet. These two types are a logical result of the individualism of the Renaissance. Man absolved of responsibility and freed of all shackles imposed by the tyrannical dogmatism of the Medieval Church suddenly loses faith in the Church and consequently in its oppressive system. Having abandoned a set code of ethics, he either becomes irresponsible, or tries to discover some alternate system, which Shakespearean characters do not find. This happens when practice does not conform to values. But a still worse situation is created when the moral issue itself is confused, as in *Julius Caesar* and *Troilus and Cressida*, where it is difficult to blame or justify any character in the plays. Shakespeare was writing at a time when a moral chaos, a confusion of values, had taken the Renaissance society into its grip. Shakespeare cannot be studied apart from this historical background.

Take another example. When we come to Milton, the irresponsible and blundering Renaissance individualism has found a channel for its expression and has developed into the mercantile adventurism of the seventeenth century. Since the merchant has to trade within a social frame work, he cannot ignore the social reality, though within that reality he is still free to determine his own independent course of action. The mercantile individualism is a socially responsible individualism. That is why the clash in the seventeenth century

is not the Renaissance clash of the individual with the society, but it is the clash of one class with the other, and the English civil War of the seventeenth century was a clash between the feudal aristocracy and mercantile enterprise. The Royalists and the Puritans stood for these two classes respectively, and while loyalty to the throne and the nobility of the blood was the slogan of one, independence, hard work and efficiency were the slogans of the other. A study of *Paradise Lost* is a study of these historical forces, It was incidentally this fear of the Civil War which made the eighteen century England very cautious, pleading for balance and advocating the supremacy of the rules. Dr. Johnson of the eighteenth century found Shakespeare of the Renaissance irresponsible and careless of his moral responsibility as a playwright. Similarly the Romantic slogan of the language of the common people and their thoughts and feelings being the genuine material of poetry has a definite historical significance, and Wordsworth can be rightly studied as a literary corollary to the French Revolution In the same way the present day school of *the Absurd* can be viewed in the same background of confused values in which a man is condemned to make a definite choice and assume its total responsibility in an unpredictable world.

Thus a scientific study of literature would relate it to its historical background. We cannot say that a villain is a villain because he is by nature so. There is no such fatalism in Iago or Macbeth. A scientific thinker knows that being determines consciousness.

Beside the historical background, another important consideration for a critic is that science proceeds from the known to the unknown, that science bases its investigations on concrete facts. For the evaluation of a piece of literature these concrete facts can be summed up in four co-ordinates, which are of equal importance. These four co-ordinates are: (1) The piece of literature under discussion, in various aspects of its form and content; (2) The world-view or philosophy behind the piece of literature; (3) The author; (4) The audience, the public which is addressed. Now take them up one by one.

1. The piece of literature under discussion is our first term of reference. Its form is determined by the prevalent modes of expression, which in turn reflect the social reality of the time. Sonnet, Epic, Free Verse, Ballad and the Heroic Couplet are all associated with specific periods of English literature. The highly disciplined Heroic Couplet would be the form popular in a highly conventional and regulated society whereas free Verse will be the mode of expression of a rather loose and heterogeneous society. Similarly Ballads reflect a popular mode while the Epic appeals to very sophisticated minds. In the same way, metaphor, simile, and other imagery will place the piece of literature in time. Thus, the form itself is an aspect of the social reality of its time.

Similarly the content of literature, its subject, for example, reflects the concrete reality which creates it. The Renaissance writer speaks of adventure, of power and of ambition while the modern writer speaks of boredom, absurdity and frustration.

2. The world-view or the philosophy behind a piece of literature determines its form and content. Bacon's writings are a good example of the scholastic rhetoric put to the service of practical reality. He would use conceits, very conventional and rhetorical, but always intended to drive an argument to some concrete practical conclusion. Dante had the philosophy of St. Thomas at his back and succeeded in giving a very chaste poem in *The Divine Comedy*. Shakespeare, who had Seneca and Cicero and Machiavelli to guide him, portrayed the world of divided aims and confused motives. The eighteenth century had Newtonian mechanises as its background and it created a mechanical literature, such as Pope's Rape of the Lock. Wordsworth's inspiration came from Locke, Hartley and Rousseau on one side, and from the German Idealists through Coleridge, on the other side. His Aeolian – Orphean concept of mind – matter relationship marks the beginning of a serious practical application of Dialectical Philosophy to the concrete problems of life. The auxiliary light of the mind and a "corresponding mild creative breeze" which "the sweet breath of heaven" makes him feel within, contend in him to solve the

mystery of consciousness. In our own time various philosophies, Marxism, Existentialism, Logical Positivism, Idealism and Mysticism, are influencing the writers of the age, and their work cannot be appreciated without a reference to their respective creeds.

3. The author himself is an important aspect in the study of a work produced by him. His ideas, his training and his class background determine the nature of his work. Let us take a specific example. Wordsworth believed that poetry should express the thought of the common man in the language of the common man. He wrote of the rustic, the leach-gatherer and the labourer. But what was his experience of a rustic's life? He was a man of urban training and habits. Nature was a recreation to him, a holiday resort. It was not the field for action. His field of action was his imagination, his world of ideas. That is why a rustic and a labourer in his poetry are idealised into fairy-land figures. While appreciating the basic humane element of his poetry, it must not be forgotten that he was too far removed from human experience to have a concrete experience of it, something for which he was condemned by Byron. He chose the common man to be the subject of his poetry, but he did not know the common man.

4. Though he wrote of the common man, Wordsworth never saw things from the eyes of a common man. He wrote like a benevolent feudal lord lavishing praises on his humble serfs, who appeal to him in their uncomplaining submission, because they put no demands on him. The reason is that Wordsworth was writing on the common man, but not for the common man. He was writing for sophisticated urban public of the London society, which was fascinated by the romantic ideas of the noble savage or the innocent rustic. His was a patronising attitude and his sympathy for the peasant was rather a spring of benevolence. This pragmatic view of the writer, the view which is oriented towards public demands, is also a very significant factor in determining the value and the quality of literature. Who he writes for is a very important question in evaluating a writer's work.

To sum up, then, a piece of literature, its philosophical background, its author and his audience, are all important factors which must be considered in its evaluation.

Finally, science is progressive. It continually refers back to reality and takes stock of its perpetually changing aspect. Newtonian mechanics brought a revolution in science and it explained almost all mechanical phenomena which had till then been confronted by man. But new vistas were soon opened and it was realised that with the discovery of Elementary Particles a new stratum of reality has been discovered to which the laws of Newtons' mechanics did not apply. Newton's laws related to large bodies, and did not apply to the smaller world of atoms. Newton's physics was Macro-physics. Now a Micro-physics was needed, and we had the Quantum Theory. In the same way all genuine literature has taken stock of the changing aspect of reality, and all revolutions in literature have been in the name of return to the reality of the day. Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Bacon, Dryden, Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot are only some of the names which represent a perpetual assessment of the state of literature at a particular time and the need to return to the thought and speech of the common man. From Hamlet's advice to the players "that you overstep not the modesty of nature", to T.S. Eliot's "sensibility alters from generation to generation in everybody, whether we will or not, but expression is only altered by man of genius" is a continual reminder that literature has its roots in the concrete reality of ever changing life, from which it departs only to its disadvantage.

The study of literature is thus essential to the education of young men and women and cannot be discarded as mere luxury. The inimical attitude to the study of literature is still another example of our misplaced over-emphasis on the study of science subjects and dropping the teaching of English literature from the list of priorities.

❧ Chapter 03 ❧

A Meaningful Approach to English Literature



Teaching of the literature of a foreign language must serve some national interest, otherwise there is no justification for subjecting our students to its discipline. If Shakespeare is superb or Milton great and Wordsworth excellent, what is it to us? If we cannot relate foreign literature to our needs there is no use teaching it.

Foreign literature is taught in the universities all over the world. But it is taught according to some national objectives and education policies. Consequently, we now have French, American, British and Russian interpretations of English literature. In our universities the teaching of English literature is further confounded by our haphazard approach to it. We indiscriminately follow the various interpretations and mix them up so confusedly that it becomes extremely difficult to have any one distinct approach to English literature. For one author we may be following the Russian approach while for the other the French and for still another the British. Idealistic, Marxist and Absurdist approaches on *Hamlet*, for example, are usually asserted by the students in the same essay. Some remedy for this confused state of affairs must be sought in order to put English literature on healthy academic lines in this country.

We need to formulate a Pakistani approach to English literature. The Shakespearean age, for example, can be viewed as an age of sharp conflict between feudal and mercantile interests. The English interpret their history in their own way.

Others look at it from different angles. The Russians will pinpoint certain forces working behind this conflict which perhaps will escape the attention of an English critic. We too are faced with a similar conflict in our country. The feudal and mercantile classes do have conflicting interests and these are very distinctly affecting our social consciousness. This consciousness should be able to make an independent survey of the Renaissance situation in England.

Similarly the repercussions of the Industrial Revolution in England as projected by Dickens could be studied in the light of our own experience with relation to industrialisation and the consequent socio-economic problem and the labour situation in Pakistan. Also, the structure of our society is in a fluid state, and our consciousness built on this situation can make an independent study of similar situations in other countries and at other times.

A meaningful approach to English literature is therefore possible and must be sought and encouraged. This can be done by relating English literature to our national needs. In the first place we must decide what to teach and how, and, in the second place, we must discover and project a national point of view about English literature. This will be of a far greater import and implication than may appear. English literary criticism by and large has actually been the basis of all criticism applied to our own literature. In Urdu as well as in our regional literatures, criticism is generally derived from Western theories, right from Plato to T.S. Eliot and even later. It, therefore, becomes extremely important that we put our critical thought on healthy lines.

Recently Aziz Hamid Madani has come out with a book about Modern Urdu Poetry. It is largely a thorough discussion of various thematic and formal trends in English literature, which had been popular for a century or so. English literature in fact provides the most important background to Urdu literature which without it will be not only un-intelligible, but even its very existence will be threatened. Urdu literature

needs English literature at its back to derive strength from it and even for its own survival.

But the reason is that Urdu Literature lacks in Literary brilliance as it has not taken recent changes in the world seriously. Not only literary techniques have changed, rather the whole world scenario has changed which is not visible in our society. Therefore we look towards English literature for these new developments.



❧ Chapter 04 ❧

Teaching Shakespeare Today



After a recent lecture on Shakespeare in a local college, a student asked why Hamlet was such a devout Christian though he lived in the renaissance which was an atheistic age. A still more “revealing” remark was made by another young man, in another institution, that according to him all literature led towards communism.

This was, it must be confessed, a very shocking realization of the kind of education being imparted to our students these days. One has to take stock of the whole gamut of information injected into the young minds in and outside the class room in order to understand the phenomenon.

Though the spontaneous response was that communism had not yet become a term that could be understood by Shakespeare’s age in its twentieth century meanings and that the students generally have a very erroneous concept of both communism and religion, the matter is of a much greater significance and deserves serious thought.

Recently a teacher at the Senior Cambridge level revealed that the teachers in Pakistan get guidelines from Cambridge that our students, particularly in the subject of Pakistan Studies, should be instructed not to give biased opinions. Their answers are sometimes very embarrassing for any one who has the slightest idea of the history of the sub-continent.

Actually education, during the last three or four decades, has been reduced to mere labelling of facts rather than a critical understanding of these. It has been accepted to be quite natural to view the world as a black and white contrast and there is no hesitation to affix the labels of the infidel or the faithful on

anyone whom one considers to belong to his party or to the party of his opponents. Unfortunately there is no one to peel the labels.

The most familiar definition of the renaissance is that it marked a shift from ideas to practices. The renaissance did not consider it enough to fix a belief. Practical significance of belief was considered more important. It is not enough to say that we believe in truth while no one really practices truth in the day to day affairs of life. Francis Bacon made it very clear that people practise not truth but expediency. Illustrating the fact that pure gold is not currency, he uses a conceit, in his inimitable brilliant style; "mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold or silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it".

The classic example of belief without practice is that of Satan whose belief in God is perfect, but in practice he refuses to obey his command. The Renaissance was conscious of this duality; we are not. And we never bother to think, to put our beliefs to test. The renaissance was inquisitive, not atheistic. It was this inquisitive spirit that inspired Marlowe to write *Dr. Faustus*. Faustus was not an atheist. He had full faith in Christianity, in God, in Christ, in Angels and in the day of judgement. Only he found his belief a hindrance in the way of his worldly ambition. Had God not turned him out of Paradise, we, in all our innocence, would have perhaps been impressed with his firm faith in God, though Akbar Allah-badi warned us that we do not practice what we profess:

"مصیبت میں بھی اب یادِ خدا آتی نہیں اُن کو

دعائے نہ نکلی، پاکٹوں سے عرضیاں نکلیں"

(even in the worst of their calamities they do not remember God;

Instead of prayers from the tongue applications pour out of their pockets).

Without such confusion in the mind, it will not be difficult to appreciate why an intelligent and educated young man should think that the study of literature shakes his beliefs and calls, all his cherished convictions in doubt. The fact is that literature forces one to think, whereas he has been trained to accept precepts without question. Bertrand Russell once remarked that scientific attitude is unnatural to man. According to him the rising sun of science, in the seventeenth century, extinguished a thousand stars of superstitious beliefs.

All this makes Shakespeare very relevant to us to-day. He saw the confusion of his age and tried to define it. His plays attempt a clear exposition of the duality of thought in which his age was caught. Shakespeare raised questions. He did not have the presumptuousness of providing answers, a fault for which he was reprimanded by Dr. Johnson. Answers he had none. But what really matters is the question – the wisdom to frame the question and the courage to ask it. We need that wisdom and that courage, and Shakespeare can teach us both.

Lack of this awareness, which prompts questions, is central to our malaise, not only in the sphere of faith, but also in social intercourse, in business affairs, and even in politics. It is only Shakespeare's clear mind that can put the following lines in the mouth of a fallen, humiliated and imprisoned King Lear, which he addressed to Cordelia:

No, no, no, no! come, let's away to the prison:

And play, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies, and we'll wear out
In a wall'd prison, packs and sets of great ones
That ebb and flow by the moon.



❧ Chapter 05 ❧

Teaching of English at the Degree Level



Post-graduate problems are usually an extension and enlargement of the unresolved issues in education at the lower level. The teaching of post-graduate English has become problematic not so much as a direct consequence of the controversy over the national language but as a feature of the sea-change that has been taking place at school and intermediate levels. The neglect of structural and grammatical training at schools and its further postponement at the intermediate level, where English has already passed into the phase of being a medium rather than a subject, confronts the graduate-level teacher with the unresolved problems of basic structural comprehension. This study raises interesting objections to the concept of functional and remedial English at the graduate level and questions the fitness of framing syllabi that impose technical burdens on the pupil without engaging his interest.

The problems of teaching English at the degree level are rooted in the over-all policy of determining the place and scope of English in our system of education. These problems neither originate at the degree level nor can their solutions be sought here. By the time a student joins a degree class he already has behind him an almost desperate struggle, of seven to twelve years, with the ghost of English which keeps eluding him. . The teacher at the school is burdened with the idea that the teaching of English is a long term plan and that there is no need to be in a hurry about it. So the foundations are never properly laid. English suffers further neglect at the Intermediate level where the student is already too busy doing

his major subjects and has neither time nor aptitude for English. At the degree level he finds it already too late to learn English. The teaching of English at the degree level becomes really embarrassing. Students are too old to be taught English primers. Tables of tenses and the practice of writing on a four-line exercise book are all that the majority need. English is, in fact, never taken seriously. This is the real problem which becomes only too obvious at the degree level.

The Bureau of Education, Lahore, carried out a survey to determine the cause of deterioration in the standard of English. A specially designed questionnaire was distributed among the teachers of English in various institutions. Given below is the statistical data reported by the teachers of English in answer to the query. 'How far have the following factors contributed to this deterioration?'

Factors	Mostly	Largely	Partly	Slightly	Not at all	No Response
Syllabus	15	14	35	14	10	12
Text Books	19	20	34	9	10	8
Method of Instructions	29	25	28	7	4	7
Student-Teacher Ratio	39	31	10	9	4	7
Importance of Language	19	21	14	15	18	13
Aptitude	46	22	12	8	6	6
Mixing of English/Urdu Medium Students	35	20	20	12	3	10
Other Factors	5	2	31	51	6	5

40% students hardly give any importance to English in their studies while 29% pay only some attention to it. 13% seem

to be quite confused and offer no response to the query. Also, 18% have practically no aptitude for English.

It may sound very strange, but the fact is that our problem with English is that we are having too much of it. We are caught in a deluge of English. Consequently, all our energies, efforts and talent are going waste. The output is a mere fraction of the input. Of approximately 3 lac students admitted to class VI, the stage at which English becomes a compulsory subject, hardly 38000 make any use of it at all, academically or professionally. The statistics compiled by the Bureau of Education make this absolutely clear.

90% wastage is itself a major reason of deterioration in standards, since it makes the whole activity appear so meaningless. This is in spite of the fact that the general educational climate has otherwise improved over the past years. The number of educational institutes has increased. There is a better teacher-student ratio. The libraries have been modernised with such facilities as Xerox machines, which are even commercially available. In the extracurricular field the role of mass communication media, such as the Radio TV. and the press, has been unprecedentedly enlarged. Nevertheless our problems with the teaching of English are only becoming more acute with each passing day. We have not been able to reconcile the conflicting demands of teaching English.

There is also the question of great academic loss. By retaining English as a compulsory subject we are only catering for the mediocrity. No one can pursue higher education unless he passes in the subject of English in B.A. Thus, someone very good in mathematics, Urdu, Persian or Islamiyat, for example, will never enter the university if he fails in English. On the other hand, someone having only a little knowledge of one of these subjects and a little good luck in English will be eligible for admission in M.A. The best students thus find the doors of higher education closed on them while the mediocre have all the opportunities. English in this way becomes a hindrance in the pursuit of higher education. Also, since the best students

join professional institutions after Intermediate, the teacher, particularly the English teacher, has no option but to teach the mediocre, the majority of whom have neither the aptitude nor any use for English. The main question therefore is — do we need English at the degree level?

Why do we need English? The layman is made to believe that we cannot exist without it. The educationist tells us that we need it only as a stop-gap arrangement. Regarding the Medium of Instruction, National Educational Policy of 1979 states:--

The constitution of Pakistan provides a specific framework for the introduction of Urdu as the National Language. According to this framework:--

1. The National Language of Pakistan is Urdu and arrangements should be made for its being used for official and other purposes within 15 years from the commencing day.

One wonders if the 'commencing day' has dawned or are we still waiting for it. Almost a decade of the stipulated interim period since the promulgation of the constitution has already gone but there has been practically no progress in the policy of switching over to the National Language.

The Education policy further elaborates:--

The study of English as a second language is necessary to keep in touch with the modern knowledge. At present there is a great paucity of books written in Urdu in scientific and professional fields. Immediate adoption of Urdu as the medium of instructions at all levels would in fact become nearly impossible for students of medicine, engineering and similar other professions. Inadequate availability of books translated into Urdu would become a great problem. It is, therefore, necessary to phase out the change-over and accomplish it in about 5 years at the intermediate and degree college level. The decision to introduce the National

Language as medium of instruction at the professional and university education level should be based on the experience gained in the meantime particularly in relation to availability of textbooks written in the National Language.

The Education Policy then gives the Programme:--

- (i) English will be taught as a compulsory second language from class VI onward in all the schools. and
- (ii) Teachers in the existing English medium schools will be permitted to teach through the medium of Urdu or an approved provincial language.

The fundamental fact of our education is that a good knowledge of English is absolutely necessary for us. We must therefore have good English but not more than is sufficient for us. A very senior educationist once remarked that the large number of failures in English was due to the high-brow attitude of the teachers of English who insisted on maintaining the standards of Oxford and Cambridge in Pakistan. The same educationist on another occasion complained of the falling standards in English. The students argue in their own way, and they too have a point. A group of M.A. English students called on the Vice-Chancellor and complained that English was taught in English in the English department. They had found the teachers of English too exacting. Their argument was that many subjects in the university were taught in Urdu. Particularly the languages. Arabic was taught in Urdu. Persian was taught in Urdu, Then why, they argued, was English not similarly taught in Urdu. This amply proves that the standard in English is directly related to the over-all academic standard in the university. Unfortunately, instead of raising the standards in other subjects to the level reached in English, English was cut down to their size. Why then so much clamour about English? It is because people are concerned about English only. Nobody is bothered about standards in other disciplines. Actually English has become in our society a term synonymous with education. Good English means good

education, while a man with poor English is considered uneducated.

Surely, we do not want to Anglicise the whole nation. Also, this question of compulsory English from Class VI onward must be viewed in the context of about 80% illiteracy in the country. It will be ridiculous to have 80% of the population absolutely illiterate and insist on the remaining 20% attaining not only literacy but also proficiency in an alien tongue. The oft-repeated argument is that English is an international language. But how many of us need and have international interests? English is inevitable for us as the medium of instruction for higher education. But, then, how many of us pursue higher education or undertake research? Then it is argued that we maintain contact with foreigners in academic, scientific and professional fields. Again, a very small number of people will be concerned here. We are only catering for 10%, as demonstrated in the statistical analysis, but we are pestering the other 90% with compulsory English for which they find no use. As for the liberalising influence of English, and its being a window to other cultures, it is very doubtful whether these arguments will go in favour of English or against it. However, the subject may be postponed for further treatment later.

The next question to consider is how much English do we need. In Tolstoy's short story, "How much land does a man need", it is revealed in the end that ultimately the land a man does need is a six feet long piece of ground that is sufficient to fully cover him. Our gluttonous approach to the acquisition of English is beyond comprehension. Our students going to Russia, Germany or Japan learn the languages of these countries to a level of proficiency required for higher education or advanced training within a period ranging from six months to two years. And these languages are not at all familiar to us while English very much is. We inflict English on our students for nine long years, in the case of Urdu medium schools, and for fourteen years in the case of English medium schools. And hardly any proficiency is achieved. Over 60% fail every year in

the degree examination. In England and the USA students are required to do a European language at the university level for two years. English is taught as a second language for four to six years in most west European countries.

Very few of our educationists and teachers of English seem to have any idea of how a foreign language can be utilised in a system of education. They appear to have only one concept in their minds, that of Functional English, by which, surprisingly, everyone seems to understand a syllabus which proscribes literature from any scheme of teaching language. Literature, however, cannot be completely eliminated; but then care is taken to guard against its having any semblance to literature. Thus science fiction is prescribed for science students, suggesting thereby that if any literature is given to the students doing 'functional English', must not be first rate literature produced by the most reputed writers of English. One wonders what specific function it serves which genuine literature will not, and in what department does real literature fail to serve the purpose. We have been given only one concept about the teaching of a foreign language, and that is erroneous and highly misleading.

A formal distinction is now made by the experts between the various uses to which English can be put in a country where it is not the native language. These are English as Foreign Language (EFL), English-as-Second Language (ESL), English as one of the mediums of instruction in a bilingual academic atmosphere, and, finally, English for Special Purposes (ESP), English for Science and Technology (EST), and English for Professional Purposes (EPP), the latest in the family. What should be the status of English in our system of Education?

The EFL programme is introduced at a later point in the curriculum. It emphasises content and often does not prepare the student to use the language as a medium of communication in the environment. It is, in this sense, more utilitarian in its approach, and is more concerned with direct application. It

aims at giving a rudimentary knowledge of the language, expecting the student to attain proficiency in the course of the study of his subject, through reading, writing and speaking. This programme is applied to the special group of scientists, doctors and engineers. But in our system of education this group is identified much later, at the post-intermediate level, when they actually join these special institutions. EFL will therefore not suit a group about which even the teacher is convinced that the majority will not find access to a special institution, that is, admission in medical, engineering or advanced courses in science.

The ESL programme implies using the language as an alternative medium of communication, that is, environment supports the use of language. Perhaps this programme is better suited to our conditions where we have quite a lot of English in the atmosphere through the mass communication media, such as the Radio, TV, and the press. Our cinemas also show quite a large number of English films. Then, besides English, there are other subjects which are taught in English, such as the science subjects, or those subjects which use a large number of English terms and expressions, like psychology, economics or political science. But unfortunately we have never really accepted the most obvious fact that English is the medium of instruction. We do not even like to acknowledge English as the second language in earnest though we may pay lip-service to it, and though the Education Policy may state that, 'The study of English as a second language is necessary'. Had we really accepted this status of English we would not have played havoc with it and brought it to the present miserably low state in education. To whatever position we may relegate it in our policy statements, the fact remains that in practice English is the principal language, rather the only language of instructions in our country. Our attitude to English has been hypocritical, and the hypocrisy has found such deep roots that we are not even aware of it any more. We should for once give up making stop-gap arrangements and tentative and transitory provisions. This attitude of expediency in making National Educational

Policies about the medium of instruction must be given up, and instead of interim arrangements, we must devise a long term policy.

Next comes the Bilingual Education programme. It rests on the assumption that two languages have equal status in the educational process. We would like to consider English as an alternate medium of instruction. But the fact is otherwise. It is Urdu which may after some time rise to the status of an alternate language. This is how the Education Policy (1979) puts it, as Programme (v):-

National language will be used as alternate medium of instruction at the college and university levels progressively. Complete switch-over to Urdu as medium of instruction will be accomplished in a phased manner in a period of 5-7 years (p.61).

This is the practice also. Questions in translation from English to Urdu and vice versa are always bracketed with alternate questions in English for those who may not like to attempt the questions in Urdu. The same emphasis is reflected in our insistence on teaching English as a compulsory subject right up to the degree level, whereas we teach Urdu only as an elective subject after the High School. We have unconsciously accepted English as our language. This was revealed in an interesting situation when a proposal came up before the Academic Council of the university some years back recommending concession in the subject of English to Arab students on the plea that English was not their language. Our traditional generosity to the Arabs moved everyone and the proposal was almost accepted when a very senior member rose in his seat and informed the house that English was not the language of our students either and that as such they too deserved such a concession. Obviously nobody had thought of that before.

Our tragedy is that we accepted the recommendation of the National Education Policy in part. English was practically discarded, but no arrangements were made to prepare Urdu to

take its place. We are thus reduced to being a tongueless people.

We have yet to determine the status of English in our system of education. Our need is to have good and sufficient English rather than a meagre and meaningless mass exercise. But it needs courage, courage to change, whereas we have only been tinkering with the existing system. In the light of the preceding discussion it appears that an ESL programme will best suit our needs. English is not really a foreign language to us, as are German, French or Russian. It cannot have the status of a bilingual medium of instruction since a very small fraction of our students has any use for it. But the ESL programme must be scientifically planned and earnestly implemented. As a compulsory subject it may be taught for, at the most, four years, that is, from 9th to 12th class. One thing, however must be very clearly understood that the duration of a course by itself is not sufficient to determine its weightage in the academic system.' A system of education has four major components: duration of the course, syllabus, teaching method and evaluation. All previous experiments in the teaching of English failed because they attempted merely a slashing of the syllabus. The old model was retained as such. The duration remained the same and the same lecture method of teaching English was continued. There was no change in the system of evaluation. A similar blunder was made in the introduction of the semester system in which only the method of evaluation was changed while the other components were retained as such. Naturally *and quite expectedly it was a complete disaster. While changing over to an ESL programme, the education policy about English will have to be thoroughly revised and recast.

Care must be taken to eschew any adventurism in framing educational policies and programmes. Academic results are neither immediately gained nor instantly wiped out. It takes decades, even generations, for educational efforts of a nation to bear fruit. Therefore it becomes absolutely essential that all emotionalism is shunned in the planning of education

in the country. The entire situation must be dispassionately and scientifically studied, aims and objects and needs clearly defined, data carefully collected and then, after a thorough analysis, and with far-reaching consequences in mind, a policy should be framed about which the planners must be sure that it will stand all social, political and economic pressures, changes of governments, manifestos of political parties, etc., at least for 15 years. Unfortunately successive governments in Pakistan have found education to be the most convenient institution to tamper with. And English has always been the easiest scapegoat. Years are spent to frame fiscal, industrial or political policies. But decisions on education are taken in days. Education cannot be subjected to the slogans of the day. Governments and political parties come and go, but the nation stays and its needs do not change as quickly as the centres of power in the country. The fate of all the policies and schemes of education in the past is before us. The three-year degree course was a miserable failure. Higher Secondary education was detached from the university education and made a part of the school education. The scheme was soon abandoned, and Higher Secondary education became the rather anomalous Intermediate education. As one of the consequences, the teaching of English was thrown into the limbo. The Boards of Education and the universities failed to establish proper liaison. There was no relevance, no continuity between the syllabi set for the Intermediate and Degree classics since the Boards of Studies in the two institutions worked independently and in total ignorance of the activities of each other. For sound academic results the courses of studies should be so planned that each year is built sequentially on the preceding year. An education policy was discarded but it left behind unhealthy effects on the teaching of English. In a similar way other schemes flopped. The Honours school scheme did not work in spite of attractive incentives given to the students. His Superior Science colleges ceased to be superior and the huge buildings of the Comprehensive schools are practically rotting. The worst, however, happened to the semester system. English, once again, was the worst sufferer. In the first thirty years of

the existence of Pakistan about a dozen first classes were awarded in the M.A. examinations in English. In the five years of semester, only first classes were awarded, thanks to the decision of declaring 'B' grade at par with the First class, under the students' pressure. In English everyone knows that evaluation is always qualitative as compared to other subjects, such as Mathematics, where evaluation is quantitative. When one was awarded a 'B' grade, he was a 'B' grader, but on the basis of total marks he became a first class. In English we actually award grades not marks. One gets 60 or 80% marks because he is evaluated as first class. A first class is not given because he has scored 60% marks. The result of declaring 'B' grade First class, was that everyone became eligible for selection to teaching posts in the universities and colleges. In the comprehensive examination system second divisioners were not eligible to teach in the university. The academic deterioration in the teaching standards in English can well be imagined as a result of this policy. Recently, a similar haste has been shown in the Islamization of the syllabi. Most teachers of English are not convinced that the portions of the syllabus retained are more Islamic than those deleted. But much harm has not been caused because the changes made were only nominal. Emotionalism, in the name of ideology, patriotism or anti-colonialism, must be very carefully avoided while framing the National Education Policy. Besides emotionalism and misconceptions about the role of a foreign language in a system of education, the love for experimentation is an equally risky business.

We have already made a mess of our linguistic problems. It has become as complicated and as controversial as the question of culture in this country. We are a people and we have a culture whether we discuss it or not. Similarly we use language and have our linguistic needs. English is a matter of utility for us. As we need cars, railways and aeroplanes, so do we need English. We must determine its place in our education in terms of our needs. Obviously it will have cultural overtones, which any imported thing bring, with it. For

instance, we used to sit on the floor for meals. It was regarded to be culture. To eat with your legs dangling was considered unmannerly. Now we have dining tables, introduced from the West. To have dinner on chairs is now culture. It has even gone further, and after some initial resistance and protest, buffet dinners have also been accepted in our culture. If the study of English also brings some cultural influences in its wake, we must not be too touchy about it. We should learn to live with other cultures. And we have already shown that we are not intolerant or narrow minded. In foreign films and in the foreign languages programmes on the TV., we have allowed screening of women in skirts and have not censored their eating and drinking habits on the plea that these reflect their culture, and we do not distort the fact that they have a different culture. We even show Olympic contests in which women participate in bathing costumes and meagre sports outfits. Language is, before anything, a human activity, and it is roots in the way a people live, and at the same time promotes that way of life. The language of a people is its culture condensed in words. Actually the rooted of this problem lie in our confusion that we do not consider English as a foreign language. We unconsciously think that it is our own language and we can purify, modify or adapt it as we like. We forget that it comes to us ready-made. We do not create it.

Another factor responsible for creating this confusion is the North-South politics. It concerns the question of the flow of information. The developed countries of the world have concluded that the under-developed countries do not need basic knowledge. They only require technology. In recent years the experts on the subject of teaching English as a foreign language have come out with theories that simply seek to convert English into a linguistic technology. It must serve as an instrument in the hands of the natives, and must not make them inquisitive about human relationships or about man-machinery relations. Only language is taught and literature is declared a forbidden fruit. The approach is of recent origin. Earlier, in the pre-independence days, the education policy

devised by the British for India prescribed a heavy dose of literature'. Our English medium schools still pursue the same policy. Starting with nursery rhymes, anecdotes and Aesop's fables, going through Pilgrim's Progress, Gulliver's Travels and Lamb's Tales From Shakespeare, we came to ballads, lyrics, and ultimately to the original works by the great masters. By the time he joined the 3rd year class in a college a student was equipped with a sufficient background of English language and literature. In that situation we could talk of standards. But now the situation is dismal, particularly with the introduction of the concept of 'Functional English'. The standard of English practically stands still from the 6th to the 14th class. Anyone who fails in English in the B.A. will also fail in the subject in the High School examination. The questions in English set for the B.A. examination are almost of the same standard as those set for the High School examination. The case is the same with the quality of the answers in various examinations. This is academically a dead system of education without any advance or progress in instruction and performance. The result is that even in an M.A. class one has to teach basic grammar and spellings. How a word is spelt or how a sentence is constructed should nor require years of instruction. This is all due to misplaced emphasis. If proper coaching is not done in the initial one or two years, the student will never be able to learn the language. By the time he comes to the degree classes he has been thoroughly bored and rendered immune to linguistic correction. Instruction becomes nauseatingly stale. No teacher can go on teaching grammar indefinitely and still retain his students' interest in it. Grammar and composition classes cannot become popular in the colleges. Either it becomes just a nominal exercise, barely confined to taking the roll call, or the teacher indulges in gossip and loose talk to humour and impress the students. If English must be taught for a number of years, the syllabus must be so arranged as to keep up the interest of both the teacher and the students.

Take the case of English for B.Sc. where instead of two papers now they do only one paper. The prescribed text

contains 8 essays and 4 stories. (Why should the stories for science students be science fiction only? To study fiction scientifically may be helpful. But what use is it to read fiction about science, and that too at the advanced degree level?). Now there is a practical difficulty for the paper setter. 40% weightage is to be given to the text and 60% to grammar and composition. From the text book four questions have to be set out of which the candidate is required to do two. Two papers for the two annual examinations are to be set simultaneously. Then, the questions must not be repeated. Thus eight of the twelve textual pieces are used in setting papers for one year. For the next examination the syllabus is reduced to only the remaining four, while the other four will have to be repeated. Therefore just four to eight lessons have to be prepared by the students for a degree course that is spread over two years. The examiner's choice is further limited by the restriction imposed upon him that only descriptive questions are to be set. No criticism or commentary is allowed. Is it not a mockery of education for a degree student with 9 years, or more, of serious drumming in of English behind him? Checking the other part of the paper, that is, the so-called language portion, is a frustrating experience for any teacher of English. It appears from the scripts that the students have never done any English except in the examination hall. Spellings are awful, grammar horrible, and any sense of the language almost nil.

In short, the syllabus must be interesting, progressively improving in quality as well as quantity, enough to give the students pleasure and keep them sufficiently busy during the period of study. The students must also be encouraged to develop the habit of independent thinking. These purposes can be served through a course of literature with emphasis on the learning of language. Students must be given the best writing of the most reputed writers. This is the best way of improving proficiency in the language. You cannot coach young men to play football by simply teaching them the rules of the game. They must watch the best players of the game in action. We

expect our students to take a direct plunge into the language. After reading a book on swimming you jump into the river at your own risk.

To make a concrete proposal I recommend that English should be a compulsory subject for four years that is from class 9 to 12. Beyond that it should be an elective subject. Compulsion kills the pleasure. Students will enjoy doing English when they have a free choice to do it. At the same time standards must be raised. Lowering of standards will decrease the challenge. Good teams show their best game against strong sides. Against weak sides their performance falls short of their real calibre. It has been amply demonstrated in the case of English. The pass percentages in English were embarrassingly low. Standards were blamed. Courses were slashed to get better results. Syllabi were then recast making them as easy as possible. The pass percentage stood around the same 30 or so. However, these 30% were far too below the mark as compared to the 30% of those who studied better courses in the past. Standards must be raised to have better pass percentages. In the same way the syllabus for the 4 years of compulsory English must also be of a respectable standard and volume. Here again, I shall make a concrete proposal. An approach to English Literature for Students Abroad by H.B. Drake is the best suited to our needs. It has once been a text book here. It is in four volumes which were taught in the four years of High School and Higher Secondary education. This should be reintroduced as it was a successful course and there were no serious complaints against it.

It introduces to the students the best works of the greatest writers of English with an emphasis on the teaching of language. About the utility of a book, I quote from its introduction which is addressed to the teacher:--

To understand the meaning of words is so obvious a necessity to anyone who wishes to read, that it need not be emphasised. The method of learning the meaning of

words, however, is another matter. Moreover, the method must depend on two things, the range of vocabulary required, and the way in which the memory works.

To read an English newspaper or a novel demands a mastery of several thousands of words. This means that the limited vocabulary, which serves for the first few years of English study, will not serve for wider reading. As we are now concerned primarily with reading, and not with the elements of the language, the problem is how to acquire most rapidly and most efficiently a vocabulary of the necessary proportions. This series aims at solving that problem by observing the principles which it involves.

These principles are:

1. Words of most frequent use must be learnt first.
2. Words must be acquired a few at a time.
3. Words must be mastered by repetition.
4. Words must be both acquired and mastered, not in isolation, but in association.

These principles are dictated both by common sense, and by the nature of the memory itself.

.... words and also idioms have not really the precise meaning which dictionaries suggest. It is difficult to define exactly even such words as house or table, and abstract words are far more difficult to define. The fact is, that words take shade and colour from their surroundings. To appreciate literature, this shade and colour is as important as the basic meaning of the words. As a result, the more often a word is met with in its context, the richer it becomes in significance. Not only is it enforced upon the memory by repetition, but it grows in connection and suggestion.

As an example, consider the word “word” itself:

What is honour? A word.
A man of words and not of deeds
Is like a garden full of weeds.
Words without thoughts do not to heaven go.
On the word of a gentleman.

In what precise way, then, does this book put these principles into practice?

It assumes, first of all, that the reader has already read Books I, II, and III and has thus mastered a vocabulary of some 3,000 of the most common English words, selected on word-frequency principle, together with the most frequently used word-groups by then. Then passages in Book IV introduce the reader to a further 700 words or so of which about 500 are to be carefully learnt. Thus this effective vocabulary is brought to about 3,500 words. The new words are all defined within the terms of the previous 3,000, and are dealt with in the order of their appearance in the book. They are not defined more than once, but for the convenience of the reader a glossary is provided at the end of the book showing on which pages the definitions occur. This fourth book should carry the reader’s vocabulary up to the stage where he can be left alone to continue his studies of literature with ease and enjoyment....

This book is scientifically prepared and should serve our purpose well.

We need not raise our brows at the mention of ‘literature’. Besides the cognitive aspect, language has an affective aspect as well. And this is the more important of the two. This is needed by the scientist as well, since he too has to communicate well in order to be properly understood and appreciated. Language devoid of human interest will be a dead language, like having Greek or Latin by rote. Besides, man in addition to his material concerns, has social and emotional

needs. He must also cater for his spiritual nourishment. We must save men in the professions from becoming purely utilitarian. Men must not be made to turn into robots. A language course can also be used to overcome the communication gap created by specialization. The man of science must continue to be a social being. Men with a humanistic education will never produce Draculas, atomic bombs or chemical weapons. Much of the misery of the present world has been caused by over-emphasis on sciences at the expense of liberal education. Among sciences literature is also a science of living in human society, and should be taken as such, and given its proper place in education. It has almost become a cliché now to say that man has tremendously extended his control over the external world, but his control on himself has not improved. There must be made provision for liberal education, that means an education which is not specifically utilitarian, and which broadens outlook, enlarges vision and brings enlightenment. Man must also learn to have fun for sheer fun. He must retain some innocent childlike interest in the beauties of the world around him. But this is not an apology for literature since literature also serves utility by enriching the language and teaching the techniques of expression. A good system of education teaches the use of language through principles and examples. Proficiency, however, is individual achievement and it rests on talent rather than formula. Though linguistic mechanics are important, talent must be cultivated.

To conclude, English is our need and must be taught and taught in all earnest, with the maximum possible proficiency as the object. We must also use it as a window to the world. But it must not be inflicted on those who are not prepared to take it up, or who find no use for it. It must be an elective subject at the degree level. In this way we can also have a better teacher-students ratio in our colleges, which will very much help in improving the standard of instruction.

❧ Chapter 06 ❧

Teaching of English as a Compulsory Subject



The problem of teaching English as a foreign language in Pakistan has been discussed *ad nauseam*. A lot has been written on the subject and many committees have been set up to find ways and means of improving the quality of teaching English. But all efforts seem to add only more confusion to the already confused situation.

The concept of teaching English as a foreign language in Pakistan is absolutely misleading. In fact, when we think of teaching a foreign language, it generally means to impart instruction only to a limited number of people who would like to learn that language for some specific purpose. Such will be the case of teaching Urdu in England or French or German in Pakistan. Teaching of English in Pakistan is actually a programme close to that of mass literacy, even more difficult, since mass literacy is not imposed.

All theories of teaching English as a foreign language tell us how to impart skills of learning English to a small class of students pursuing the study with a clear end in view. The small number of students makes intensive instruction and individual attention possible. No theory has yet been evolved which may guide us how to teach English to a class of 100 or 150 students who have hardly any interest in the language, and have, moreover, been completely disillusioned with the prospect of learning it.

The problem of teaching English in Pakistan is not just the problem of teaching a foreign language. Nobody seems to have thought of this dimension of the problem.

Our education policy in general, and the language policy in particular, has further confounded an already hopeless situation. Truly speaking, these policies are no more than slogans. Political expediency, not academic need, has been the main concern. English cannot be given up and no earnest effort is made to provide for its proper teaching.

In the article entitled *Teaching of English at the Degree Level*, (included in this volume). I had demonstrated with the help of data and documents that of all the school going children who take up English as a compulsory subject hardly 10% make any use of it at all. It is such a colossal loss, of national resources. This manner of imposing English on the nation is creating serious social, psychological, academic and financial problems. Proficiency in English has actually come to be regarded as a criterion of education and culture. Those persons who fail to acquire this proficiency feel socially backward and develop an acute inferiority complex. So much money and resources spent on education thus become counter-productive. Every year a large number of candidates in various examinations fail mainly due to English. The rate of failure may be as high as 80%. The energies of our youth/that could be directed into creative channels are miserably frustrated. These students who fail in the examinations not only lose self-confidence, they become a social liability, only because of a wrong system of education. They become absolutely incapable of making any meaningful contribution to national life. Some even take to wrong ways and become crooks.

Academically, too, the loss is no less alarming. A student who may be very good in Urdu, Islamiyat, Arabic or even mathematics cannot pursue higher education if he is not sufficiently good in English. Our education system promotes

only mediocrity — with a little knowledge of the subject and some proficiency in English. The real talent is eliminated. The fault does not generally lie with the student. It lies in the system which insists on English but does not provide proper conditions for its teaching. The status of English as a compulsory subject through the entire academic career of a student also deserves serious rethinking.

The situation is further aggravated by the system of two parallel streams in education, those of English medium schools and those of Urdu medium schools. Not only that it creates two nations within one nation to the great disadvantage of the Urdu medium students, the English medium students suffer no less when the two streams merge in higher classes. Their command of English also suffers as a result of the poor academic standards of their class-fellows.

In the past English was not just a subject in the curriculum. It was also the medium of instruction. With the change of the medium of instruction to Urdu, English has now been reduced to being one of the subjects of study, though still compulsory. As a result the student has been deprived of the environmental support that he enjoyed when English was the medium of instruction. „ Through an explosion in the field of education now we have students coming from backgrounds where not only in the family, but in the locality or the village of their origin they are the only educated ones. We must not forget that the bulk of our population lives in villages where even a mention of literacy rate is preposterous. Beyond mere literacy the ghost of English stares one in the face.

Instead of directing attention to the real problem the policy makers embarked on experimentations. They started by reducing the volume of the syllabus. Functional English was introduced and serious writings in English were thrown out. The logical end was the Test-Item Pool compiled by the University Grants Commission in 1983 — a voluminous book

spreading over more than 400 pages and completely doing away with the content. The Pool does not even mention the grade or grades to which it may be applied thus presuming that standard of English is the same for all stages. And English is taught as a compulsory subject up to the Degree level. The University Grants Commission considers it to be a post-graduate subject.

Thus the principle of learning by rote – which is the hallmark of the present education policy that prescribes Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies and Arabic as compulsory subjects where the overlapping of topics is quite common and the intellectual challenge is virtually missing – finds its way into the teaching of English. Language detached from the idea and sentences without context can only lead to learning by mechanical repetition. Medieval scholastic approach to learning still finds some favourites even in the age of science. In some institutions has large numbers of students in a class English is now being tangled by dictating notes on the land speaker.

With the end not clearly in sight, the planners enjoyed ingenuity at the expense of serious business. Sophisticated methodologies were sought and evolved. Some even went so far as to think that a course in linguistics may make the teaching of English easy. They forget that our problem with English is that it has to be taught at a mass scale. Courses in the teaching of English have been devised and the subject has been introduced at the post-graduate level. The conventional Grammar-Translation method has been discarded, blaming it for being overburdened with terminology. But linguistics and the new methodologies bring more terminology with them. Along with nouns and adjectives one has now to learn the new terms, such as 'Numerical Adjectives', 'Distributive Adjectives' and 'Demonstrative Adjectives'. There is nothing wrong with the methodologies. Only these should not become the end - a

mistake committed by the old grammarians. A teacher's concern should be to teach the correct use of language. All methodologies can be helpful. A teacher's approach should be eclectic. Whether it is the grammar-translation method, the structural approach or the direct method, the teacher will have to seek from everywhere and adapt all approaches to his working conditions.

The other cause of confusion is a misplaced enthusiasm on the part of the planners of the courses in English to go for quality where utility should be the primary consideration. The emphasis on 'good English' is beside the point in a situation where even the Degree student cannot write simple correct English and one comes across expressions like, 'I thank he is a good friend', using 'thank' as the past tense of 'think' or spelling 'drawing room' as 'draying room'. Attempting to teach good English to such students is like training those to run who cannot walk. Perfectionism is never a good approach.

The real problem with our students is that a vast majority of them never have an opportunity of writing even a line of English. Speaking English is simply inconceivable. Majority of them write English for the first time in the examination hall. No doubt there are good teachers. There is also no dearth of good schools either. But the academic standards have deteriorated to such a low level that any individual effort will be absolutely inadequate to deal with this serious national problem. A crash programme at the national level is the only solution, the emphasis must be on improving the teaching of English at the lower levels of education, more particularly at the village level.

English is not something to be simply passed on or imparted to someone. It is a skill.. The only remedy for the deteriorating standards of teaching English as a foreign language is to provide for adequate opportunity for practical exercises in writing and speaking English. The best method to achieve that end is to introduce the Tutorial system in schools

and colleges, more particularly in schools. The University Grants Commission has misconceived the teaching of English as a post-graduate subject. The foreign agencies, like the British Council and the USIS, make the same mistake. No wonder the expenses on the teaching of English are increasing and the standards of performance are deteriorating. If attention had been concentrated on schools, and school-masters rather than lecturers had been selected for teacher-training programmes at home and abroad perhaps the results had been positive and more rewarding. The teaching of English should be completed in school, and five to ten years of schooling should be sufficient to have the basic concept of the language. Changes must be made in the education policy to achieve this end. First of all the nomenclature of 'Second Language' for English should be given up. Since in Pakistan English is not the first or the second language, rather it is the only language of scholarship and of all modern disciplines. It will be better to designate it as an Associate Language with the National Language, to satisfy national sentiment, till such time as Urdu is sufficiently developed to replace English. Secondly, the two streams of English and Urdu medium be abolished and all schools should be ordered to use the same medium of instruction. Finally, teaching of English should start at the same stage in all schools. The present practice of allowing some schools to start the teaching of English from class I and others from class 6 is not academically sound. There must be a uniform system of education in the country and a clear policy about the medium of instruction.

I have suggested on many occasions that the tutorial system is the only answer to the problem of teaching English where the classes are overcrowded and it is not possible to bring the teacher-taught ratio down to reasonable limits. The tutorials should be so arranged that a teacher is assigned groups of 5 students, each group attending the tutorial at least

once in a week. The students should be given written exercises in these tutorials which must be checked regularly. In order to ensure the teacher's interest, each student should be charged 10 or 5 rupees per tutorials which should be paid to the teacher. In order to ensure the students' interest, a student may be allowed to change the tutor if he is not satisfied with him. tutors may be employed on contract from outside the school or the college if the need arises.

Also, as in science subjects, there should be a practical and *viva voce* examination in English in which the student may be given short exercises on the spot. Their written exercise books should also be evaluated at the time of the *viva voce* and students be given credit for working regularly during the academic session.

No doubt this will entail some additional administrative and financial burden. But if the desired results are to be achieved cost should not matter. And positive results will surely follow if the tutorial system is given a chance to work in earnest.



Chapter 07

The Status of English in Our Curriculum



Let me make it clean at the very outset that our problem with English is not that we in any way lack in it. The problem is that we have too much do it. I shall not enter into the age old controversy of English, on the one hand, condemned as a vestige of colonialism and, on the other, defending it as an international necessity, since colonialism and neo-colonialism have many forms, and a mere linguistic approach will not solve the problem. Moreover, international liaison is no serious problem as is borne out by the example of so many advanced and developed countries of the world which quite successfully and efficiently do without English. I shall concern myself with the problem from a strictly practical point of view, the point of view of a teacher of English.

My experience as a teacher of English has convinced me that the manner in which English is taught in our country is a serious hindrance to the development of a student in more than one ways. It produces alarming results academically, economically, culturally and psychologically. Ultimately this means a great national loss. Let us consider these factors one by one.

The usual pass percentage in English in the B.A. examination is 22, and it has stood at that for many years. The situation in other examinations is not much different. It means that 72% students fail in various examinations every year mainly because of English. It is a colossal loss which becomes still more serious when we come to know that these students

are sometimes quit good in other subjects, in which they do at times score first class marks.

It is most unfortunate for any nation to give more emphasis to a foreign language as compared to its own language. This is exactly what is happening in our country. English has been given much greater importance than the national language. Urdu is a compulsory subject only up to the high school level, but English is compulsory up to the degree level. A student is subjected to the study of English for four years after he is supposed to have done the national language.

So much English for so many years creates a confusing situation for the educationists. They fail to decide how to cope with the teaching of English in the higher classes. Whatever they have done has resulted in the deterioration of the standard of English in our country. For, over a century English has been taught here as part of a literary tradition. It was pointed out, and correctly, that English literature was an unnecessary and unbearable burden on the majority of students. Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, or the theories of nature were of no use to most of them. The emphasis was shifted to the teaching of English as a functional language. The experts' diagnosis was correct. But they failed to take one very important factor into consideration. They did not appreciate the problem of the teacher in the class. The teacher insisted that no language can be taught without some introduction to its literature, that the literature of a language provides the best examples of its application. The argument may be justified, but this is not the real concern of a teacher. What concerns him most is to keep the students interested in the subject. He needs sugar-coating the bitter pill. Literature adds spice to the dry business of exercises in grammar. The teacher needs some anecdotes, some flights of imagination, and some intrigue or catastrophe to keep the students absorbed in the lecture. If the large size of the class makes the teaching of English impossible, he can at least enjoy some rhetoric.

Obviously, a functional teaching of a language does not need ten years of study. Sufficient linguistic proficiency for practical day to day use can be acquired very easily in two years time. When the students have already been taught English for six years in the high school it is very boring and monotonous to rub it in for another four years in the college. The student who has failed to understand and use English during the six years in school will be so disheartened that in the higher classes in the college he will not be able to make any serious effort in this direction. He is almost convinced by this time that the English language is beyond him.

On the other hand, those who are good at English, for instance those coming from the English medium schools, will find the whole business such a trifle and so childish. That is why the teacher needs, the flavour of literature. In the first place no student is interested in the language, and secondly, the class is a hopeless mixture of the two types of students: those knowing very little of the language and those knowing it quite well.

The situation is extremely discouraging for the teacher. When he is addressing himself to one section the other is totally out of the discussion. It is for these reasons that in the present system of education lecturing is not teaching. In huge and unbalanced classes the teacher resorts to declamation. In a college the teacher's first problem is class discipline. Teaching is therefore out of question, since as he starts correcting their grammatical mistakes, some students are so weak that just one exercise, will consume the whole period. What shall the rest of the class do then? Obviously the teacher must keep them engaged. So instead of teaching them he impresses them. The teacher's efficiency suffers, and the general standards of education gets a setback.

Directly linked with this academic loss is the economic loss. Students fail year after year mainly for English. This, beside being a financial loss to the student in terms of fees and other expenses on books, stationery and private tuition and in

terms of lost work hours impoverishes the nation as a whole by this wastage of manpower which could be used in nation building projects. An instance of this huge individual and national loss can be seen in the case of two children of average talents. One goes to school and the other becomes an apprentice in a workshop. After 16 years of education the former as it happens to a vast majority of our students, gets an M.A. degree and if luck favours him is worth about 300 a month in a clerical job. The apprentice, on the other hand, has become a capable technician in these years and not only lives a better life himself but also helps in the advancement of the nation. This is because of our misplaced emphasis upon English 'because education is equated with the proficiency in this language otherwise in his trade a technician is quite educated. Beside this big loss the merit national resources bear the strain of unnecessary battalions of English teachers who are practically doing no useful work for the nation, or even for the individuals.

This emphasis on English serves only the interest of a very small minority in our society. Ultimately it is a status symbol. Two different cultures are developing side by side in Pakistan. The English medium schools, missionary schools and the public schools are producing a different kind of 'culture. Unfortunately this cultural dichotomy is socially approved and officially patronised. In this confused state of education, one type of students reads only English, and that too generally cheap popular fiction, mostly thrillers; while the other is hunted by the spectre of English. Neither do these students improve their English nor find time for other subjects. Consequently they read nothing. Even other examination subjects are hurriedly prepared from cheap notes. Thus the basic object of education that of broadening one's mental horizon through education and general cultivation of taste and sense of social responsibility, is defeated. The students in either case live in a state of cultural isolation and this is mainly because of this over-emphasis upon English.

Finally there is a big psychological problem. Because of such a great emphasis on English in our academic economic and cultural activities proficiency in the language has become the most accepted criterion of merit. Consequently a student failing in English considers himself worthless, starts losing confidence in his capacities and falls a prey to inferiority complex. He is incapacitated and his talents simply wither away. Thus a teacher who can speak good English faces little disciplinary problem in the class whereas the one with a poor expression in English finds it extremely difficult to command some respect among the students. One hears students sometimes commenting about a teacher that if he was really as scholarly as he pretended to be then why he did not do M.A. in English. This reflects their own complex. Sometimes even a teacher claims with a sense of pride that though he is a lecturer in another subject, he has been teaching English to various classes.

We can now clearly see what great damage this misplaced emphasis on English has done to us. It has no doubt done some good to a tiny minority. But the price we have to pay for that is too high. If we want this colossal wastage and this great loss to stop we shall have to give English its proper place in our curriculum. We cannot impose it upon the unwilling majority of which we have already seen the results. We have no other examples to learn from in this respect, since no nation in the world was ever called upon to make the experiment of teaching a foreign language to its students on such a mass scale. For a Tripos from Cambridge, for example, one has to do a foreign language, such as French. But the standard of work required is very nominal, almost equivalent to that of the optional languages, Urdu, French, Persian or Arabic in the B.A. examination of the Punjab University.

First of all we must confess that the whole business has gone beyond a joke, that our students should not be pestered with English any more. The sanest approach in this direction will be to teach English as a foreign language. If our students

going abroad can acquire sufficient workable knowledge of German, French, Russian or Japanese languages in a year, or even less than a year's time, our students here can learn English in a similar way, I propose that English should be a compulsory subject for the High School examination and should be taught for two years, i.e. in the 9th and 10th classes. In these two years they will learn more English than our present graduates do. There is no undue optimism in this belief, since it will be much easier to teach the beginners in the subject. Our college students are not ignorant. They have acquired some knowledge of the rules of grammar at the school. This knowledge is only ridiculously wrong. A B.A. student may shock you by writing "enemysip" for enmity or "wented" for went. He will also be writing English according to the rules of Urdu grammar. These students have first to be untaught, and only then will they be able to learn correct language. The students coming fresh to the language will not need any unteaching, and so the teachers' labour will be reduced by half. Moreover, these students learning English for the first time will take more interest in the new subject and every new word or new phrase will be an exciting discovery to them. After the High School English may be made an elective subject. Majority of students do not go in for any specialisation. They simply seek ordinary office jobs. Two years of English teaching will sufficiently prepare them for that. Those going in for higher studies may take up English as an elective subject. Those doing Medicine or Engineering already study English up to F.Sc. and are in no way lacking in it. This is sufficient to prove that there is no need of making English compulsory up to the degree level.

Of the oft-repeated arguments about academic standards it should suffice to say that the only great nations in the world are those which have developed their own languages. This is also true of those nations which like us were subjected to foreign rule for long and which were even in conditions worse than ours. If reliance on foreign aid in economics and

armament will keep us only a second rate nation, reliance on a foreign language will never help us raising ourselves from being a second rate or even a third rate nation. Once we realise the importance of the national language in the building of a nation, then we can easily enrich our own language by large scale translations, for which we need only a few hundred scholars well versed in foreign languages. Dr. Johnson perhaps went to the other extreme when he remarked that an Englishman speaking a foreign, language correctly was not truly patriotic. I may, however, close this discussion with the narration of a personal experience. I was once travelling with a group of young Germans who had just finished School. They showed much interest in talking of Pakistan and Pakistanis. One of them, however, remarked, "We like you very much. You are a struggling and, hard working people. But there is one thing in you which we hate. Even among yourselves you speak English".



❧ Chapter 08 ❧

Proficiency in English



Concern for English, and its falling standards, has again seized the attention of some. Though, as a matter of fact, it is not so much that the standards in English are falling as it is the question of the relevance and utility of English to the common man, particularly now when new economic opportunities are opening up in the Middle East and the rest of the non English speaking world. The standards are definitely not falling whereas a lot can be said of the worth of English to the large numbers who are cruelly subjected to it, failing by the hundreds and thousands in various examinations every year. The furore about the falling standards of English is so loud that to suggest otherwise sounds like a half-serious joke. But also, it is ironical to hear people speaking chaste English with a faultless accent complaining of the falling standards of English in the country.

Whatever criteria we may choose to assess the situation there is nothing to show that English is in any way on the decline in Pakistan. Teachers', qualifications, instructional facilities, number and standards of educational institutions, international competition and efficiency in the offices, all show a definite advance in our proficiency in English.

If we look to 50s and 60s we see that many teachers of English in the colleges were not M.A. in English, and a large number of the available M.As. had only 3rd divisions. Now we have so many qualified teachers. Many third divisioners have improved their divisions. Others have made up their deficiency

with long experience in teaching. Besides, no untrained teachers are employed in schools any more.

Student-wise also there is marked improvement. Criteria for admission to colleges and universities have been raised so much that students with first division also find difficulty in securing admission to various classes. This is particularly remarkable in view of the rapid and prodigious growth of educational institutions in the country, of the increasing number of students in various classes and the facilities now available to them. Where we had 5 to 10 students in a class of M.A. in English 15 years ago we now have 40 to 50. Also, for a couple of M.A English classes then we have over a dozen now.

The number of educational institutions has also increased. In 1947 we had only one university – the Punjab University. Now we have over two dozens in the country. The number of colleges and schools has also increased. Besides, there is a great pressure on English medium schools which have registered a mushroom growth in recent years. Some of the more reputed ones among them have opened annexes and separate branches to cope with the rush. Add to the list the vast network of mass communication media. TV. Radio, Films, Newspapers and magazines are pouring English in torrents on young minds. There is no reason to believe that the quality of English and the emphasis on it are in any way declining.

If we look at the output, our students are far better in English than the Arabs, the Thais and the Malaysians. It was a British Council official who once remarked that outside the English speaking world the best English is spoken by the people from the Punjab. It is a fact that even among ourselves we speak English.

Moreover, we have had and are still having our own problems with the foreign students. Those coming from the Middle East and South Asia find our standard of English too high for them. Foreign students in our universities have been asking for concessions in English. These appeals have been so

persistent and so moving that the Punjab University was actually persuaded to consider their plight and one of the high powered bodies in the university almost conceded to their demand on the ground that English was not their language. One of the members however, reminded the meeting that English was not the mother tongue of our students dither and that they also deserved concession. The matter was dropped. But the anecdote is symbolic, rather symptomatic. We have been so much engrossed in English that we have forgotten that it is a foreign language. How much more can a nation be faithful to a foreign language? Even Persian and Arabic never enjoyed this prestige. M.As. in Persian and Arabic do not make such an efficient use of these languages. Those who do M.A. in English at least make an effort.

Even if we look at the more usual routine work we see that English as official language poses no difficulty. In those offices, on the other hand, where Urdu is the office language we see much confusion and inefficiency, such as in land offices, where a language is used which is almost impossible to decipher. In our eagerness for English we have forgotten the use of our own tongue. In offices where English is used the work runs smoothly. Take, for example, the offices of the Punjab University. Whatever may be said of the university administration, it does not in any way lack in the use of English. Even the junior clerks in the university handle the language with dexterity. They interpret rules, make reports, prepare drafts and write notes, and they do it so well that sometimes the professors cannot answer them.

It must have been quite evident by now that there is no falling off in English, that we have kept up the standards well, and that this language is in no danger of deterioration or neglect in this country. But the anxiety in some quarters about the present state of English and its future in Pakistan is symptomatic of another phenomenon. No doubt we have more than fulfilled our colonial obligations, and have most obediently served the imperial idea. It has been long enough.

But now our priorities must be corrected. It is in this respect that the persistent emphasis upon English provides some cause for concern. And it is this concern that unsettles the advocates of English here. English is becoming, quite rapidly, unproductive, irrelevant and rather cumbersome and a general antagonism towards it is rightly pointed out. Our students failing by the thousands every year surely have no soft corner for English in their hearts.

The main reason for English losing ground here is that the conventional approach to the teaching of English is culturally oriented and this culture itself is dated. Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton are no longer social references. No one these days enjoys the beauties of style and the niceties of expression for their own sake. Gone are the days when literary taste was the mark of culture and quotations from Tennyson and allusions to Macaulay determined one's status in society. These are the days of practical realities, of direct experience, and of the immediacy of the needs, and thus of precision in expression, consequently the emphasis on functional English. But functional English cannot be drummed in year after year for a whole life time. One subjected to instruction in the functional use of a language for twenty years of his life will be bored to death with it. From the time a child learns to speak a few words, like dada and tata, till he graduates at 21 or so English is continuously hammered into his head so much so that he is immunised against it, becomes insensitive to it and loses all desire to learn it. By the time he is in the university his responses are already fixed and he becomes absolutely incapable of learning. The problem with English in this country is not any inadequacy in its use or teaching. The problem is the overemphasis on it. There is no lacking in it on our part. We have only too much of it. And this excess is nauseating. Someone once complained that the cinemas were crowded and the churches were empty. He was politely told that when there will be as many, cinemas as there are churches the cinemas will also go empty. What it means is that even the noblest things

can be overdone. And we have overdone English. We need some relief from it now. This will be good for English itself. English is a beautiful language. It contains some of the best literature of the world. Also it is a very rich language, full of the most valuable information which is vital to our progress and to the progress of humanity. We should not allow it to fall into disrepute by our foolish overanxious patronage of it. English should remain here, not as a nightmare to our younger generation and the generations to come, but as a hope and as a source of enlightenment to them. This is possible only when English is given its due place and not killed through over-indulgence.

English is a foreign language and it should be taught as a foreign language. If German, French, and Russian, or Arabic and Persian can be taught in a year, why not English. Let there be functional English. But it should not be taught for more than a year or at the most a couple of years. The results will be much better than what we get after a life long straining after the language. No doubt a few may be much benefited from the present system. Some of us may be more English than the English. But a whole nation cannot be Anglixized. It is illogical and a sheer wastage of energy and resources. The earlier it is realised the better.



❧ Chapter 09 ❧

Pakistani English



Pakistani English, or for that matter Punjabi English, has been used as a derogatory term almost in the same sense as Babu English, Bearer English, Kitchen English and Pigeon or pidgin English being a corruption of Business English, a jargon chiefly of English words used between Chinese and Europeans. But in recent years there has been an insistence from some quarters on distinguishing the loose kind of English, used by the non-native speaker, not as incorrect but as varieties and sub-varieties of English.

The problem basically concerns those non-English speaking communities who live in English speaking societies, more specifically in England. The Caribbean, the Indians and the Pakistanis, like so many other immigrant communities, feel a great disadvantage and embarrassment for speaking a language that is at variance with standard English and suffer a sense of 'linguistic insecurity'. Thus the need to raise the status of these non-native uses of English by asserting that these are varieties of English rather than errors of speech.

Dr. Tariq Rahman's maiden attempt at devising a model for what we call Pakistani English deserves attention. Such attempts have already been made to assert similar claims for Indian English (IE) and other varieties of the language used in other non-English speaking countries. Dr. Rahman's Pakistani English is a scholarly, thoroughly researched and well documented survey of the English that is spoken and written by Pakistanis living in Pakistan as well as those living in English speaking countries, particularly in England. Its most

significant contribution towards the teaching of English in Pakistan is, however, the detailed survey of what the English language teachers call “Error Analysis”. These errors are largely attributed by him to the first language interference. Our habit of imposing the Urdu idiom upon the English language creates a variety of English which is different from the native English. So far as the phonetic and phonological aspects are concerned such variations are inevitable, since our vocal system is not trained to produce the English sounds. Not only that we turn English diphthongs like ‘o,u’ and ‘ei’ into monophthongs ‘o’ and ‘e’, the consonants like k, p and t are not aspirated words – initially, or in the beginning of stressed syllables.

There are also morphological and syntactical differences such as the omission of the article, the use of the progressive aspect with habitual and completed action in certain stative verbs, as for example, ‘I am doing it often’ for ‘I do it often’ and common confusion in the use of the prepositions.

After elaborate analyses and illustrations Dr. Rahman suggests a pedagogical model of English for Pakistanis. He claims that this model is prescriptive. It is based upon the assumption that Pakistani English is an institutionalised non-native variety of English.

There are two problems with such a model. If accepted as institutionalised, the language must have a convention which is reducible to rules. The rules must be taught. If so, then why not the rules formulated by the native speakers and established through a long convention? The problem with our people is that they have not been properly instructed in the English language. Those who are better educated make less departure from the standard language. This has been pointed out by Dr. Rahman himself when he gives four sub-varieties of English used by Pakistanis. This is the other significant contribution of this study that it has emphasised the class character of language. Four kinds, or varieties of English that the Pakistanis use have been identified here as (i) BSE (British Standard

English) (ii) Acrolect, the upper class English, (iii) Mesolect, the middle class English, and (iv) Basilect, the lower class English. The use of correct and standard language, King's English or Urdu-e-Mualla, is a class affair. This has always been so. The Arab elite had complained to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) about the incorrect pronunciation of Sheen and Quaf by Hazrat Bilal (RA). Only the elite pronounced them correctly. It is no simple matter of correctness. There is much more to it than that. This is what Dr. Rahman calls the problems of "linguistic insecurity".

Bernard Shaw took up the subject in *Pygmalion* where he picked up a common flower girl, a guttersnipe, and trained her in elitist speech that transformed her into a lady.

Such variations will always remain in a class-ridden society. But these variations too must roughly follow the rules prescribed for standard language, as is the case with cockney.

The other difficulty in institutionalising Pakistani English will be the confusion that the existence of two sets of rules for the same language will create. If the proposed model is accepted and the rules for the use of articles and prepositions are relaxed it will be difficult to distinguish between the correct and the incorrect, particularly in pedagogical assessment. If, for example the expression:

1. Army is good profession
2. To dispense
3. I am doing it often

are accepted as correct, then any one writing

1. The army is a good profession
2. To dispense with
3. I do it often

will be automatically declared wrong.

If we take a similar case with reference to Urdu, should the Urdu spoken by Karachi and Bombay working class, or the

Karkhanadari Urdu of Delhi, be accepted as a variety of Urdu and institutionalised?

One may, however, accept as a variety the language that Joseph Conrad, a Pole by birth writes which the English find foreign in tone and rhythm. But Conrad's English is not incorrect. It varies from the standard English only in rhetoric, not in grammar. Such is the Urdu of Intezar Husain, which is different from the Urdu generally written and spoken in Lahore.

Then comes the question of acceptance. Who is being asked to accept this un-English English? Not the Pakistanis, since they are not aware of its being un-English. So far as the native speakers are concerned, they have already been reconciled to this loose use of their language. But as a pedagogical standard it will only create confusion.

There is still another question, of greater academic importance, that of lowering the standard and exposing the learners to least challenge in order to accommodate the very weak among them. In early 60's it was argued that the pass percentage in various examinations was despicably low – as low as 22% – and this was all due to English. It was therefore decided to lower the standard in the subject of English. First, difficult sections from the syllabi were deleted. Then the size of the prescribed text was drastically reduced. Finally, functional English was introduced which brought the English taught in the degree classes down to the middle schools level. During the entire process the pass percentage never improved while the quality of instruction fell to the lowest. Introduction of Pakistani English will further lower the standards. To legitimize the errors rather than eliminating them is no pedagogy.

English being a language of international communication, will be both unintelligible, and also illegitimate, if it departs too much from the established norm, Also, academically, it will be reduced to a jargon and will not help in handling the complex

expressions of advanced knowledge with precision and discrimination.

One important point about the research methodology. One of the questions asked was, “what variety of English do you write? 1. 'British. 2. American 3. Australian. 4. Pakistani. 5. Incorrect English. 7. Any other. 8. Don't know”. Only a scholar like Dr. Rahman would know that. I wouldn't write if I knew it was not correct standard English.





SECTION – IV

Quest for an Alternative



Quest for an Alternative

In society a professor in the highest grade enjoys much less respect than an ordinary constable or a petty official of the courts. In all the advanced societies of the world teachers are always associated, even upto the highest level, in the task of policy-making and helping Government with their knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. But in Pakistan the best economist, the best legislator, the best scientist, the best academician and even the best artist and literary critic is

invariably the bureaucrat who represents Pakistan in all international conferences and seminars. The status of the teacher is thus kept at the lowest. To further humiliate him, if ever a teacher is chosen to represent the country in international forums, he is selected for merits other than academic. Within the country, even in the field of education, working teachers are not associated in the task of policy-making. Of late, more and more sections of society other than the teaching community have been showing interest in sharing the position of privilege with the traditional bureaucracy.

Diffidence and undue reticence on the part of the teacher himself have contributed to his diminishing role and status in society. He has never made his need felt to the community. He has overplayed his humility.

Knowledge and expertise, beyond mere personal accomplishments, are national assets and the teacher owes a duty to the community. He must criticise, guide and advise, even if his opinion is not particularly sought. He must lead the community in thought and practice. He must impose himself upon the bureaucracy, even if his gesture is spurned with contempt.

Our society has been almost conditioned to an attitude of hush-hush not only in political matters, but in all spheres of life. We have been forced into a habit of passive acquiescence. Consequently, we have unenlightened, personally motivated or, at best sentimental debates on issues of vital significance to the country. It is the need of the hour that teachers initiate and conduct impartial, scientific and unbiased studies of problems faced by the country in the sphere of education.

There are no easy answers to the very complex problems facing education in the country: What are we teaching our students? What are our academic and national objectives? What culture is being inculcated in our youth? What ideals of thought and conduct are we propagating? What kind of discipline are we giving to the younger generation? These are

some vital questions that concern the educator and demand his attention.

As a developing nation we are facing the challenge of carving a place in the comity of nations as well as of exploiting the available material and human resources for the advancement of the country. We face also the challenge of rescuing the nation from the rat-race of acquiring more and more wealth by foul or fair means, which has forced some of our capable colleagues to undertake tuitions and write cheap notes.

Finally, we have the most formidable task of national reconstruction before us. This is no mere political or even cultural problem. Harmony between the provinces must be achieved. A great challenge lies in creating social cohesion and balance in the nation. Widening class differences create divergent class interests. These are most visible in our educational institutions where a large number exclusively cater to specific classes ranging from schools which charge no fee to those which charge upto Rs. 1,500 or even more per month.

The discussion leads us to the conclusion that only the restructuring of our society, to realise values of justice, freedom, human dignity and the fullness of life in consonance with the cultural imperatives of our people, on scientific lines, can create a sound educational system. It will be only under a system where the teacher will have the prestige and the status that he deserves.



❧ Chapter 02 ❧

Ignorance by Choice



In this age of Perestroika and Glasnost, perhaps we are the only nation in the world who are afraid of knowledge. This was true of the Japanese at a time, but once they shed their prejudices and overcame the fear of the outside world, they are now very much in the forefront of the advanced world. It is still more regrettable in the case of a people that take so much pride in their past traditions and heritage — a heritage that encouraged adventure and exhorted people to go even as far as China in pursuit of knowledge. Travel as source of knowledge and progress was their motto. We who brought the world out of the dark ages, ourselves plunged into darkness. It was only during the last two decades, after centuries of slumbering isolation that we once again started looking outward. It was partly due to the newly-acquired democracy in the 70s and partly due to the stifling climate at home in the 80s that we became interested in the affairs of the people beyond our territory. The last two decades have seen a gradually maturing interest in Pakistan in the problems confronted by other people and in their response to these in their institutions and more specifically in their literatures. The worlds of the east and the west have been opened to us for the first time. Normally this exposure should have been received as an opening of opportunities to new horizons of wisdom. But unfortunately some of our so called intellectuals and self-styled interpreters of our values have seen great danger in it.

There has been an unprecedented interest in translations from the Third World. Literatures from America, Europe and the socialist bloc have also found ardent admirers. It has not

only enlightened our writers and thinkers, giving them new insights into the processes of life, it has also made available to them new and efficient techniques in marshalling thought and refining expression. Perhaps it is this efficiency that scared some of our leaders of opinion. They are afraid that the broadening of vision will blur their perception and a contact with foreign literature will confuse their national identity. These are the people to whom enlightenment is atheism and knowledge a poison. No wonder that they keep harping upon regional, sectarian and linguistic differences and encourage all sorts of prejudices.

It is a strange belief that an acquaintance with the world blurs a nation's identity. In the Middle Ages identity of the Arabs was not blurred by such contact. Rather a smattering of Greek, Roman and Byzantine literatures and sciences in fact became the ingredient of the great Medieval civilisation and determined its identity. We are still proud of that marvellous heritage. We do not even seem to realise that what we call our system of medicine, the *Unani Tib*, is really Greek medicine and that Jalinoos was in fact the Greek Galen. Our illustrious ancestors never thought that they were destroying their identity through foreign contact.

Development of human consciousness is a multidimensional process. There is a vertical dimension that gives access to the wisdom of the past and passes it on to the future enriched with the experience of the present. There is also a horizontal dimension which incorporates and integrates the intellectual and technical developments in the contemporary world. Between these are all the shades of opinions and influences that make the human civilisation. Greek civilisation was itself a complex end-product of all the advancement in human thought and its achievements before it.

Even such a notorious writer as Lord Macaulay, who is considered to be the worst of the imperialists and chauvinistic Englishmen and who is for this reason condemned by everyone, though read by none, has this to say of the

advancement made by the English nation with reference to the revival of letters in Europe during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries:

At that time almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted, had they neglected the language of Thucydides and Plato, and the language of Cicero and Tacitus, had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island, had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but chronicles in Anglo-Saxon and romances in Norman French, — would England ever have been what she now is?

This is the story of the progress of a nation and, by contrast, of the fall of others. And this is the observation of an Englishman whose patriotism cannot be doubted. No civilisation develops in isolation. And to achieve greatness, great civilisations must be kept in mind. Macaulay emphasises and elaborates his point by citing the example of Russia:

“There is reason to hope that this vast empire which, in the time of our grandfathers, was probably behind the Punjab, may in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close on France and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? Not by flattering national prejudices; nor by feeding the mind of the young Muscovite with the old women’s stories which his rude fathers had believed; not by filing his head with lying legends about St Nicholas; not by encouraging to study the great question, whether the world was or not created on the 13th of September; not by calling him “a learned native” when he had mastered all these points of knowledge; but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all

that information within his reach. The languages of western Europe civilised Russia.”

No comment is needed here except that this is truer of the literatures in the foreign languages in that a nation is best reflected in its literature, and the study of foreign literatures gives us a fairly good idea of how the other countries progressed and where they failed, as well as the impact of their success or failures on their psyche. We learn from this study that a climate of ideas is a pre-requisite for both the advancement as well as the backwardness of a nation. Without this awareness no progress is possible. And this awareness cannot be acquired unless we come out of our ivory-towers.

It is due to general ignorance about the universal phenomena that even the healthiest changes taking place in Eastern Europe throw a wave of scare and insecurity through the spines of some at home. They believe that once the West resolves its own contradiction — of capitalist and social blocs it will gather all its forces to crush the world of Islam — as if we have already created such a world where all the Islamic countries are treated alike without fear or favour. The fact is that what is now happening in Europe is a testimony of man's commitment to life, and his determination to wrest the fundamental rights which have been denied to him for such a long time from the oppressive hands. It is for the first time that human beings have risen as human beings — not as a group, a party, or a class — against all fetters. In the beginning of this century the people now behind the Iron Curtain revolted against exploitation, now they are out to demolish state oppression and party dictatorship. This is a very happy prospect. But the lackeys of the vested interests see in it the danger to their domination, and they are perturbed.

To return to the question of national identity, lethargy and inertia may single out a nation in the world, these cannot be said to constitute its identity. Identity emerges from action, from a desire not only to live, but to live with honour, which in concrete terms means progress. The great medieval civilisation

had such an identity. They progressed in the world mainly because they were never dismayed by any obstacles, neither natural nor ideological. They sought knowledge without reservation, and their commitment to truth was absolute. They neither took cover under hypocrisies nor hid their embarrassment in obscurantism. But when this civilisation lost vitality, its members shrank from action. They busied themselves in meaningless quibbles and wasted their talents and energies in weaving cobwebs of meaningless philosophies. They compensated their lack of action with flights of fancy, so that while others made aeroplanes they pleased themselves with their flying carpets. Humanity is advancing from one freedom to another, and this is a very reassuring phenomenon. People living solely on the crumbs of the past can hardly appreciate fresh aspirations and ever broadening horizons which, no doubt, present new threats but, at the same time, bring new excitements from moment to moment.

We are caught in our own delusions and seek novel excuses to avoid the, challenge of progress. What could be more preposterous than identifying Islam with feudalism. Feudal culture has come to be regarded as Islamic culture. Great reverence is shown to Turrah and Sherwani. But could anyone conceive a mason or one operating a furnace in a steel mill dressed like that. Ironically, all that is associated with the technological age, like the jeans and the joggers, is considered not only foreign but un-Islamic and confusing, rather corrupting to our national identity. Thus feudalism becomes Islamic and all that belongs to the world of technology is considered heathen. This leads to the belief that Islam is feudal and progress is un-Islamic. If Islam and progress are really so antagonistic, then forget about progress.

❧ Chapter 03 ❧

A Corrosion of Confidence



University by its very definition is a seat of higher learning which provides education and guidance in all fields of life. It imparts comprehensive knowledge by making available the intellectual effort and practical experience of the past and by making researches into new fields of activity. The Punjab University unfortunately failed to develop academic traditions worthy of a seat of higher learning. Academic pursuit was perhaps never an ideal and this was not in its genesis. As far back as 1933 J.F. Bruce noted in a *History of the University of the Punjab*:

‘the great bulk of our scholars never attain to more than a superficial knowledge either of English, or of those subjects they study in that language, while the mental training imparted is as a general rule of a purely imitative character, ill-calculated to raise the nation to habits of vigorous or independent thought’.

This was part of a report prepared by Mr. E. Willmot, Principal of Government College, Delhi. Mr. Bruce about the University of Calcutta, which he described as:

‘That University, or rather that examining body called a university, is nothing more or less than the Arch-Inspector of Schools of Bengal, the North-West Provinces and the Punjab....,’

This equally applies to the Punjab University. Here the Registrar and the Controller of the Examinations still enjoy a higher status than the professors so much so that a professor,

who is also the head of a department and the Director of a University Institute, prefers to be only an acting Registrar. Professors run after administrative jobs, finding no prestige in academic pursuits. It was for this reason that the provision of the rotation of headship in the teaching departments incorporated in the University Act of 1973 was scrapped. No wonder in such an atmosphere the professors prefer clerical jobs to scholarly occupation.

The principle of education in this University still continues to be imitative, but with a difference. There was a time when students read text books and did their best to reproduce from them in the examination. The things have changed a lot. Now the students ask the teacher in all earnestness, 'Sir, is it necessary to read the text books?' or, 'Is it really of any use to read the text?' The text books in fact exist no more. There are only notes. Very badly written notes, and these too are generally pirated. If you approach a publisher to get a book in print, he will sincerely request you, even reprimand you, not to waste time and energy on such stupid pursuits. He will ask you to write notes, guides, help-books, and would even make things easy for you. He will provide you the material which you will have to simply edit or only proof read. And the remuneration will be handsome.

Who is to blame for all that, the students, the teachers, the publishers or the university setup? Perhaps the greatest blame will come to the teachers. What have they done? If the teachers do not work, if they are not interested in academic pursuit, how can they inspire interest in the students. Look at the list of the faculty and try to find out how many of them are known beyond the limits of the campus. Look at the books on-all the subjects that are being published and displayed on the book stalls and try to find the names of 'Professors' among the authors. No doubt you will be disappointed. Sometime back The Lahore Education Society planned to hold seminars on the ills of our education system. It was extremely difficult to find a couple of teachers who had done any serious work in the fields

of History and Economics. The professors were very reluctant to commit themselves to the writing of a scholarly paper for the proposed seminar. The so-called Research Journal of the Punjab University is not even of the standard of a good college magazine.

The situation in the field of science is even worse. All over the world professors at the universities serve as consultants. They are looked up to for help and guidance in the field of research and planning. There exists no such tradition in this university. Not only in technology, even in the field of art and literature no advance is possible without fresh ideas, and ideas must emanate from the universities. Although a provision exists that university teachers cannot be promoted unless they produce a sufficient number of research papers, it has proved no incentive to real hard work and the teachers generally get very substandard gossip accepted as research papers.

Way back the university realised the general inadequacy of the teaching staff and decided to open departments to exclusively concentrate on research. Apart from the fact that separating research from higher learning is perhaps not a sound academic policy, it created a ridiculous situation in the university which still bothers research scholars. The formula for promotion to higher posts in the university lays down that the candidate must have to his credit a teaching experience of 10 to 18 years along with 5 to 8 research papers published in a magazine of international repute. In the existing situation those engaged in research do no teaching and those who teach have no research papers to their credit. Then, no magazines of international repute exist here. Some teachers resorted to a clever device of getting papers published in foreign magazines, specially in the subjects of science. They created a sort of pool for research. They would, it was rumoured, invite a person freshly returning from abroad with a research degree to join them. They would prepare one or two research papers out of his work and append three or four other names with his and make it into a joint research project and get it published in

some foreign journal. The university took note of this practice and decided that joint research papers will not be given full credit, giving a fraction of credit to each researcher. How ridiculous! Modern research is mostly joint research. But that is true of genuine research.

One of these research departments was given the assignment of preparing a literary history of the Muslims of Pakistan and India. This department did some valuable pioneering work and brought out a Literary History in 17 volumes. It tried to provide proper background and perspective to the intellectual and literary currents that determined the psyche of the people of this region. It also suggested the lines on which further advance could be made. But this department was closed down, though the funds provided by the Federal Government were available. Perhaps the university authorities did not seem to like the persons associated with the project. On the other hand, another department was opened which was called the Department of Iqbaliyat. During the twelve years of its existence, the department has only one publication to its credit, and that too a collection of Iqbal Centenary papers, a volume each in Urdu, English and Arabic. The department still exists.

Another department which was assigned the work of translation, adaptation and condensations from foreign books was given the name of Idara-e-Talif-o-Tarjuma or Urdu Development Committee. Most of its energies were consumed in the translation of terminology, which is unfortunately a meaningless activity in a society where no creative work in any field is being done. In a creative society it will be quite appropriate to translate a few terms in the field in which original work has been done in some other place and incorporate these into indigenous research effort-. But in a situation like ours where we import all our knowledge and technology, and the notions associated with these, wholesale from abroad, there is no sense in translating the terminology. Our illiterate mechanic is familiar with all these terms in his

crude but practical way no doubt. Our car mechanic knows the 'spanner' as '*panna*'. He will not be really happy if this name is translated for him, and that too in a very highly Persianised or Arabicised Urdu. Still the department already has some respectable and useful work to its credit.

Lately the energetic young director of the department tried to expand its activities. But he was instructed to confine only to the science subjects and not to venture into any original publications or those lying outside the field of natural sciences.

It is absolutely important for a university that research is not separated from teaching, and academic performance is duly acknowledged and encouraged. We must create a tradition of giving more respect to academic work than to administrative authoritarianism. The Punjab University Act 1973 was a step in the right direction. Unfortunately it fell a victim to the whim of the martial law. It must be revived for the promotion of healthy academic climate in the university.

The teacher also does not want to exercise his choice in the selection of his students. Or perhaps he is not at all concerned about who gets admission and what he makes of his education. This unconcern reflects the teachers' lack of interest in the pursuit and advancement of learning.

Years of lethargic life and mismanagement of the affairs in the university have not only damped their enthusiasm but also corroded the confidence of the teachers which ultimately reduces them to petty intriguers always trying to pull down others rather than raising their own level of scholarship. It is this situation which inevitably leads to all kinds of corruption, including malpractices and cheating in the examinations.

Chapter 04

Educational Problems of the Third World



Education is hardly pursued these days as a pastime, a luxury, or even as intellectual refinement, since it has now become a part of the process of production. A student is primarily concerned with the choice of a field of education which will provide him the best opportunity of finding a respectable job and starting a career with good prospects. This is the reason that the professions which were once considered so undignified have now acquired great prestige. This change of status is reflected in the new names given to these profession in the age of technology. The designations of Engineers, Surgeons, Architects and the factory owners, for example, were not respectable in the medieval age when barbers were the surgeons and apothecaries the doctors. In the same way the tradesmen, in spite of all their wealth, always paid obeisance to the noblemen of blood and titles. They are now called capitalists and business tycoons and are the undisputed elite of the society. Not scholarship or nobility but wealth has become the measure of all excellence or, in other words, the capability of generating money is now the sole criterion of honour and respect. Knowledge is no more a virtue or a distinction. It has now become a source of power, or at least an instrument of power. Education for the sake of education has no meaning in the present world. It is a means of national progress and personal advancement. Culture and enlightenment no more flow from an enlightened mind. Money can easily buy them. Different countries are no more distinguished by their different economies. The economy of a country brings with it a national philosophy, an ideology, an attitude to history and politics, and

even a taste for literature. Along with the term of national bourgeoisie we now hear of national industry also.

Now we need a philosophy, a science, a technology, a history and a literature which can assure you a place in the comity of nations. Thus the question of prime importance before every nation now is to decide what kind of educated people it needs; what sort of minds are to be formed, which science is to be promoted and which technology to be acquired. The purpose of education is to enhance the process of production.

The most prominent, and common to almost all the developing countries, is the fact that, with few exceptions, these had been the colonies of one big power or the other. Therefore, their national priorities have always been subservient to the interests of their masters who used their dependencies only for the exploitation of their raw material or the services of their cheap manpower. The old imperialistic order has now been replaced with the new colonialism, and the under-developed countries are still the suppliers of the raw material and the buyers of the finished products. This raw material is exported in the form of mineral wealth, agricultural produce, manpower and expertise or skills. The industrially advanced countries do not only take rubber or cotton from the backward countries, they also import labour as well as those brilliant students who have acquired some proficiency in various fields and who are not much in demand in their own countries. Pakistan, for instance, invests million of rupees in producing a doctor or an engineer. When anyone among them shows some talent, he is imported into the developed countries. On the other hand, if we need finished good, or experts in a field, we import them at big cost. This exchange is very unjust. Our material and talent bring in only thousands, whereas their products and experts cost millions.

Science education has been linked with the productive activity, and since there is not much production in “developing” countries, our educational objectives have come

to serve the needs of the advanced nations,. There is great emphasis on export in our country. We produce everything for export. Even our education is export oriented. Therefore the criterion of education here is not how much a student has accomplished, but what will be his worth in the export market. If you can secure admission in a foreign country or get job abroad and your articles are published in foreign journals then you, are surely very capable, otherwise you are an absolute dud. We still get the certificate of our worth from out erstwhile masters. Even today education at London, Cambridge or Oxford is a matter of great pride while it is shameful to have anything to do with the Punjab University.

The one reason is that in our society the productive activity is very slow, or even non-existent practically. The same situation prevails in almost all the third world countries. But we are so engrossed in the service of our old master and in following the their footsteps that our concerns do not appear to be ours. For example, agriculture is one of our activities. We have our domestic skills and cottage industry. No effort is made to improve these skills. They have now become simple museum pieces and reserved for cultural shows. In the same way, primary education is our need. But millions are spent on education, still the literacy rate is abjectly low. Our emphasis is on the opening of big institutions only. We talk of excellence in education, while our problems mostly concern basic needs and primary education. Then, what have we got by so much devotion to these higher accomplishments? Only this much that a few of our best minds have been employed abroad. But at the same time all those people who had no opportunity of going abroad have fallen into despondency and despair. The same applies to the health sector. We go on opening new medical colleges and producing M.B.B.S. doctors, who never go to the villages and the large majority of the people" derive no benefit from this education. We only need practitioners with L.S.M.F. kind of diplomas in large number. We need Hakims and "bare-foot" doctors, as in china, who can look after our

small ailments, and such other doctors as may be available in every village. Similarly in the sector of Engineering the emphasis is on the building of palatial houses while what we need is simple, cheap small and comfortable houses, good roads and clean streets. The Western countries have developed a very cheap system of central heating to secure themselves against severe cold. We never undertake any research to invent a device to save us from extreme heat of summer, and concentrate on very costly air-conditioning, similarly a cheap, properly regulated and comfortable transport is all that we need. But we spend all our resources on air-conditioned coaches, limousines and aeroplanes.

All our plans and policies, specially in education, do not take our needs into consideration. Their models come ready made from the advanced world of the West. Even if all education is wound up in Pakistan and all the education institutions are closed, it will hardly make any difference, since our education hardly serves our national needs. This is the reason that so much disappointment and despair are found in our educational circles. These are the real problems of the developing countries. Our wealth and our manpower are engaged but our problems are sorted out by the developed world. Even the syllabic are prepared abroad.

The most painful aspect of our policies of education is the totally undue pre-dominance of English in our curricula. It is a limit that the only concept of education in our society is a command of the English language. One is considered uncivilised and ignorant if he does not know English. The result is that thousands of our students fail in various examinations mainly because of English. Time is wasted and money is squandered without any gain. Without a knowledge of English one cannot acquire other skills either. Every important and respectable nation of the world cherishes its own language. Now people argue that even the Chinese have started learning English. It is one thing to learn English, but it is quite another thing to succumb to it. It is good to learn a

foreign language. But to know one's own language is indispensable. One's own language is the best means of communication. Resort to other languages is useful only for special purposes. Is it not a shame that even among ourselves we converse in English, however ridiculous our speech may sound?

Consciousness of its needs and a respect for its language are the pre-requisites of the education policy of a community. This is not possible in the existing circumstances. But the things are changing fast, and this change is the most visible at the international level in that however much the ruling classes of backward countries may profess to be foreign-oriented in their own countries, they now try hard to assert their separate identity in international forums. They may be exploiting their own people ruthlessly, but they raise their voice against exploitation by other nations. The most prominent slogan of the Third World countries is an equitable economic system. Circumstances are changing fast, and the justice we demand from others, we shall have to give it to others too. This puts a greater responsibility on the shoulders of our teachers. Their primary duty is to make their students aware of our national needs and the problems faced by our people. It is also expected of them that they acquire as much knowledge and skill from the developed world as is possible so that these are passed on to the new generation. They must ensure that when the change comes it does not find our youth unprepared for it.





SECTION – V

Administration of Education



❧ Chapter 01 ❧

Colonial Heritage Dies Hard



Since our system of education is mostly dictated by the bureaucracy, it is very important for us to know the composition and function of bureaucracy in our country.

Reforms in bureaucracy are once again under the active consideration of the government and a commission has already been set up to review the structure and organisation of the Civil Service. But, what precisely is the problem with the civil service? Our bureaucracy or what is now known as Public Service can be better understood if we comprehend the concept behind it and the traditional role that it has played in this part of the world.

To start with, the very words “public” and “service” have been used here in a sense that is confusing and misleading. In the context of Western democracy the word “public” stands for the various agencies which are run by representative institutions. In our native context, which is basically a despotic context, the word “public” stands for the common people, as distinct from the rulers. It is for this reason that we have no Urdu equivalent for the word “public”. When translated into Urdu it assumes the meaning of “government”, and public agencies are translated as government agencies. Thus, the public and private sectors are translated as Sarkari (government) and Niji (private) sectors respectively. Public service, in common usage, means government service.

This confusion about the concept of “public” also causes confusion in the concept of “service”. In our older tradition the

government servants were not called sarkari mulazam. They were known as sarkari ahlkar, the agents of the government. They conducted themselves accordingly. Though they may call themselves public servants they still behave as the agents of the government, inspiring fear instead of respect in the common man. Thus translated “service” in practical terms becomes “authority”. Thus “public service” in practical terms means “the rule of authority”. This paradoxical concept of service and authority associated with our bureaucracy is the cause of much disrepute for the public or civil service in our system.

Our present bureaucracy is not alone to blame for this confusion. Bureaucracy in this part of the world has a history and a tradition. Like most institutions it is a colonial heritage. Its roots lie there. Cultural and social alienation was an urgent need of the British when they came to rule India. They were extremely cautious and could afford no risks. They made a very careful study of the historical and social forces that moulded the culture of India. They found that India was a kind of vampire which sucked whole nations and strong races and brought its conquerors into its fold. There was no victor of India who was not vanquished by it in the sense of losing his own identity in an extremely assimilative soil of this magic land. The British wanted to avoid the same fate befalling them.

In order to preserve their identity and ensure complete insulation from the natives the white rulers devised a three-pronged policy. The alienation was sought on three levels: linguistic cultural and organisational.

On the linguistic level the new masters insisted on speaking English even with the natives. No attempt was made to learn Urdu, and even if it was learnt, a point was made not to speak it as it should be spoken. They developed a ‘bara saheb’ brand of Urdu. On the other hand, English was made the official language and a system of education was devised which put the main emphasis on the learning of English. The

idea was to produce clerks for the various offices with a workable rudimentary knowledge of English. Here two birds were killed with one stone. On the one hand, every one was forced to learn English, because a government job could not be secured without 'it. On the other hand, all doors of any scholarly pursuit were closed on the natives.

Our present system of education, following the same colonial lines still makes any pursuit of scholarship almost impossible since in order to be eligible for a Master's degree in science or arts, it is essential to pass the Degree examination for which English is still a compulsory subject. Instances are not lacking where a student very good at Islamic Studies. Urdu, History or Mathematics cannot do M.A. in the subject of his choice because he does not know sufficient English to pass the B.A. examination. Also, English was given such an emphasis that the students especially on the Arts side, consumed all their energies struggling with the language so that no time or effort could be spared for any other subject.

On the cultural level the colonial rulers enforced isolation in a more direct way. Separate officers' colonies and GOR estates were established outside the towns and at considerable distance from them. The centrifugal tendencies were encouraged and it became a status symbol to live in the new residential areas outside the main cities. Satellite Towns rapidly grew around main cities. These were not aimed at easing the housing problem in the cities, since most of the residents of these new colonies had ancestral homes in the town. An attitude of dissociating from the common people became the fashion and a source of pride. The colonial master was successfully creating a class of native strangers. This could not be done by any native ruler. Even the kings lived in the cities. The Mughal forts, as the one at Lahore, are all within the city walls. On the other hand, the Government House in Lahore is at a safe distance from the old city – about 2 miles from Delhi Gate, the nearest city point. With the Government

House came up the new Civil Lines and the new GOR. Even 'Gora Qabrustans' came into existence. And the local 'Kala Saheb' aped the 'Gora Saheb' in his accent, in his dress, in his habits and attitudes and even in his superciliousness. Our present bureaucrat continues to admire and emulate these attitudes.

The cleverest device was however, the ingenuity demonstrated in the organisational field. It was the creation of the institution of peons. This was a very intelligent exploitation of the Indian caste system and served four very important functions for the bureaucracy. Primarily it inflated the officer's ego. An official of the imperial services must feel superior. He must inspire awe and command respect. Also, the humility to which a peon could be subjected enhanced the prestige and the authority of the officer. A peon is unquestioning obeisance personified. The officer-peon relationship is the realisation in the concrete of the concept of rulers-subject relationship.

Secondly, the peon serves as an effective barrier between the officer and the public. His main job is to keep the visitors away. However desperate one may be, no approach to the officer is possible without gaining the favour of the peon: It is he who makes the officer's isolation from the public complete and at the same time terrifying.

Thirdly, a peon is a very important component of the red tape. He facilitates delays in the movement of the file.

Fourthly, a peon was conceived by the colonial ruler as a symbol of the meanest humiliation. They picked up the lowest of the low, put him in a livery and posted him outside the office. The most respected of the public, the elite of the society were made to cringe before him, to crave his favour in order to seek an interview with the Saheb. It will not be wrong to assume that if the institution of peons is eliminated more than half of the problem of bureaucracy will be automatically solved.

The greatest irony, however, is that all these devices, namely linguistic alienation, cultural isolation and the employment of peons, were specially created for the colonies. The Western countries do not have such a system. Their officers speak the language of their people; their Prime Minister lives in a small street in the city and there are no peons in their offices. The officers carry their own files. The clerk does not have to stand before the officer and the officer does not feel shy of going to the table of the clerk. Every one does his own work.

In our bureaucracy the privileges of 'the caste' are jealously guarded, as there are classes in bureaucracy, and each class in bureaucracy looks after the interests of the corresponding class in society. The approach of the lowest is up to the peons. The higher classes seek the corresponding higher cadres in the services. The reach of one class is up to the clerks. Others can go to the junior officers. The elite have direct contact with the big bosses. Since bureaucracy represents classes, bureaucratic decisions serve class interests. Top heavy administration is one of its consequences. On the other hand, members of a committee on urban transport, coming in limousines of the latest make, approve plans for the Omnibuses. No wonder cakes are recommended to those who cannot procure bread. When high powered bodies take decisions, priority is given to latest aircraft and air-conditioned coaches and super-highways while rickety buses shriek on the city roads, third class passengers are huddled like cattle in stinking compartments and the broken streets are heaped with filth. National wealth is lavishly squandered on prestigious universities, superior colleges, comprehensive schools, cadet colleges and public schools, while students in the primary schools sit on rotten mats in ugly classrooms in dilapidated buildings. There are big clubs, large race courses, impressive stadiums and beautiful swimming pools, but young children in

slums will keep bathing in gutters and wallowing in the mud. The bureaucratic caste system serves the social caste system.

The bureaucratic caste system is as rigid as the Hindu caste system, with only this difference that the bureaucratic system keeps itself alive by a regular infusion of fresh blood into its veins. Persons with exceptional merit may be admitted to the higher castes. But the chances of promotion are limited and rare. One may enter superior services but only upto a certain age limit. Beyond that he is not eligible to seek promotion. The idea is obviously to get hold of raw brains and mould them according to the new class. A peon retires a peon and a clerk retires a clerk. Neither hard work, nor improvement in qualifications, nor sincerity, efficiency or talent will recommended a man for promotion.

Another aspect of this caste system is the practice of secrecy in bureaucracy. Almost everything done in the office is secret. Secrecy becomes a symbol of authority and an instrument of repression in society, since no secret is really a secret. All bureaucratic secrets are only open secrets. And these are frustrating because these do not conceal information but actually make the information useless to the person concerned. If there is something against anyone in the file he cannot defend himself against it as officially he is not supposed to know it. Secrecy thus opens the way to corruption and injustice and becomes the major cause of delays in the offices. Such a system, in spite of all professions of democratic fairplay, is extremely autocratic in spirit and practice.

Like the linguistic and cultural barriers and like the institution of peons, the practice of secrecy also aims at the complete isolation and alienation of the bureaucrat. This alienation is further ensured and practically sealed for good when the bureaucracy refrains from making any reference to native situation, native experience and local wisdom. Whenever there is a problem, whenever the need of

bureaucratic reform is felt, no help is sought from the experience of our officers and our people, rather foreign authorities are liberally and emphatically quoted. Solution to our problems is sought in the theories of Lippman, Gouldner or Mannheim. Thus complete isolation from local public as well as from local thought is practically achieved.

When problems are created in one's own country and solutions are sought abroad a confusion of thought is inevitable. Consequently, no one seems to have any idea of his job. This can be seen in the large number of meetings, conferences and references from one office to the other and back. Everyone seems to be trying to escape responsibility and take the cover of somebody's advice or somebody's instructions.



❧ Chapter 02 ❧

Banning of Students' Unions



There is no doubt that the recent (1980s) ban imposed on students' unions has brought immediate relief to worried parents, almost panic-stricken teachers and a large number of people who are earnestly concerned with the prospects and responsibilities of the younger generation. But the extent to which the institution of Unions in the seats of learning had been objected to corruption is even more alarming. There are two very important aspects of the present situation that demand serious attention. On the one hand, the unions had to be curbed by a political action, rather by a Martial Law Order. On the other hand, the need of having Unions in educational institutions has not been over-looked, and an alternative machinery has been suggested to replace the banned system. The new arrangement has been, though rather vaguely, spelled out by the Federal Education Minister.

That the Unions had to be scraped by a political decision reveals the extent to which the students unions had been politicalised. Many questions of vital importance arise in this context. (1) Why and how were the students unions allowed to be politicalised? (2) Was it possible or advisable to check this trend? (3) What is the guarantee that the new arrangement proposed to replace the banned unions will not be politicised? Beside the role of the government, we must also enquire into the role of the political parties in encouraging the intrusion of politics into the academic life. Not less important is the need for the investigation of the part played by the university and college administration in converting academic institutions into

political arena. Then comes the part, played by the teachers, and finally its impact on the students. The attitude of the parents must also be considered, and beyond that of the society as a whole towards the development of unacademic attitudes and practices in the seats of higher learning.

These are very disturbing and very complex problems and to seek easy solutions to them will defeat the very purpose of a serious study of the subject. Oversimplifying the issues, or making one aspect or one faction a scapegoat will lead into wrong conclusions which may bring tragic consequences to the whole nation.

The question of primary importance is, why, in the first place, were the educational institutions allowed to be politicised and was it ever possible to resist or even discourage this trend? The answer, which very few will contest, is that it was not possible to do so. Students involvement in politics was inevitable. Pakistan Movement itself was spearheaded by students. Under the guidance of the Quaid-e-Azam, students by the thousands came out of their classrooms, paraded the streets in all the big cities of undivided India and went from village to village, practically from door to door to explain to the people the necessity of having an independent country of their own. In a community with a very low literacy rate, subjected to well-planned, sharply directed sophisticated propaganda of the Hindus, and even of the British, and openly supported by the most renowned religious scholars of the sub-continent who were held in high esteem by the common folk, it was not an easy task for the Muslim League to take its programme to the people clearly and convincingly. The only available force was the small number of the literate in the community. A large number of these too, mainly because of their class background* or religious affiliations, were already inimical to Pakistan. Among the rest a large number were either government servants or young men engaged in such other occupations that left them outside political activity. Therefore, the only force

available to work for Pakistan was that of a section of the students.

Thus, the students were, in a way, the founders of this country along with the politicians, and after the partition they emerged as a strong force in the country and this force could create serious problems for the politicians. They were the vanguard in the language controversy in East Pakistan, and were affiliated with various political parties in all parts of the country. Students involvement in politics is a legacy from the past and is directly associated with the very creation of the country. They were involved in Pakistan Movement from the beginning to the end.

There is yet another kind of students involvement in politics which is a universal phenomenon. In all the countries of the world, advanced or backward, the students form their own parties, or are associated with various political parties, which have their students Wings. But as a rule students politics is largely concerned with students problems, which generally relate to their academic difficulties or differences with the administration. Their collective struggles are mainly directed to the problems confined to their institutions.

Theory and practice of politics is also an academic pursuit. Politics is studied as a serious subject, apart from the scholastic study of political science, and political debates are regular phenomena in educational institutions, which are the best means of enlightening students on various political issues. Students form clubs and societies which have their constitutions as well as provision for election to various offices modelled on the pattern of political parties. The youth, being the citizens of the future, must be equipped with the knowledge and training for running the institutions which they are one day going to control. Politics in this sense becomes an imperative need of a system of education.

Thus, among students we have politics in the form of a national movement, as politico affiliated with national political parties, politics in students affair, and politics as an academic pursuit. The students generally find themselves drawn into one or the other of these political activities. We should study the scope and role of each of these political activities in some detail.

Pakistan Movement was more than politics. It was a Movement. It was launched with a specific goal before it. The nation had to determine its priorities. And it was considered that though education, trade and industry, as well as all other group interests had their own importance, the nation as a whole was struggling for survival. Thus the freedom movement was given the first priority. All other considerations were pushed into the background for the time being. Therefore, students were asked to come out of their classrooms and spread out into the whole country. The existence of all institutions within the nation was subordinated to the existence of the nation. It was an emergency, and Pakistan Movement was launched on a war-footing. In this way students involvement in Pakistan Movement was not an involvement in Politics. This should have been realised after the attainment of independence and a new homeland. With the creation of Pakistan the goal for which the students had come out of their classrooms was achieved, and they should have returned to their classes. This did not happen, and the students were involved in party politics. Now party politics has no specific goal, like that of a movement, which could be clearly identified in time. Politics is a continuous and evolutionary process, and demands no urgent action. There is no state of emergency in the normal political process. There is, therefore, no need to disrupt normal life, and the students must be allowed to concentrate on their studies with a single minded devotion and must not be drawn into politics, exactly as traders, technicians and bureaucrats are not dragged into politics. Unfortunately

the political parties, for their very limited and not so exalted objectives ensnare students into their politics.

This is a phenomenon which does not find much encouragement in the advanced countries of the world. Political parties organize their students' wings, but generally these do not find much favour with the students who remain devoted to their goals of career building. Two factors are mainly responsible for this. Neither the students hope to gain any academic advantage from their political affiliation nor do the political parties hold out any such promises. Gestures of this nature do not also find favour with the teachers. Thus political interest never comes into conflict with academic pursuits. Besides, with active public interest in politics the parties do not have to resort to exploit students for show of strength.

On the other hand, where students' affairs are concerned, there is no lack of interest among the young scholars. But then the administration and the faculty take no sides, and almost invariably the issues are always treated on merit. Students are left free to manage their affairs in their own best interest. This includes their interest in active political process, such as debates, discussions and elections to various clubs and societies.

In the light of the above analysis it may be concluded that the role of students in politics was utterly misconceived in Pakistan. It was quite possible and very much advisable to check unhealthy and unacademic trends among students. As a result of short sighted and narrowly motivated policies we allowed educational institutions to deteriorate to the lowest ebb where we find them today. It is feared that if the basic assumptions are not corrected, the same errors will be committed, and the newly proposed arrangement for creating students bodies will be similarly infiltrated by the opportunist politicians. We must, therefore, go into some detail to see how

this unfortunate trend found so much encouragement in Pakistan — a trend which hardly finds a parallel in any country of the world — advanced or developing.

Politics in our country has always been manipulated. No wonder then that the present regime (Martial Law) is convinced that the political parties should be by-passed in the task of reviving political process in the country. No regime, however, strong and authoritarian, can curb or even ignore genuine political activity backed by the masses. From the very inception of Pakistan politics here has been a game played, by the vested interests, and political process as such could not prosper. No elections could be held in the country, no constitution could be framed for a long time, and when one was ultimately framed, it was killed before it could be promulgated. No atmosphere conducive to political activity was allowed to prevail. Politics was confined to groups and factions patronised by vested interests. In such a situation broad-based popular political parties could not flourish. Consequently the way was prepared for the growth of cadre-parties, which aimed at capturing the most sensitive points of power in the society and the government, avoiding any possibility of ever being forced to go to the ballot-box. Educational institutions were found to be the most vulnerable grounds for the practice of this brand of politics.

Many factors combined to turn educational institutions into the arena of political strife and consequent intrigue. The primary reason for this was that education has always been the most neglected field in our socio-political set-up. So initially no one bothered about what happened in educational institutions. Everybody kept protesting and shouting about deteriorating academic standards, but no one cared to see what was happening inside these so-called seats of learning. The government, and even the parents, got worried only when students took to streets. But then it was a law-and-order situation. The only attitude that developed about the problems

in the academic institutions was a negative one. No one tried to know how the students could be sufficiently occupied within the precincts of universities, colleges and schools. No one made any effort to find out why the students were not occupied in their studies, and how could they find so much time and money to engage themselves in political and agitational activities. There was some weak, lone protest from the teachers. But then the teachers too were thrown on the defensive. Examinations could not be held on time, and no one cared. Academic sessions were unduly prolonged, and it caused no concern to anyone. A span of five years that was required to make an M.B.B.S. doctor extended beyond eight years, and no one gave any alarm. All efforts were concentrated on confining the unrest to the four-walls of the educational institutions. Panic, however, spread when lives were threatened and universities and colleges were turned into arsenals.

A Students Union is basically an academic institution, and its function, as also its corruption, can be studied only in an academic context. Unions tend to be politicised only when adequate academic incentives are lacking. There has been a tendency to view the entire educational problem in a political context and from the point of view of law-and-order. Administratively imposed discipline will not yield results. To achieve positive results educational administration must be subordinated to academic activity. Here the case has been just the reverse. Academic problems demand academic solutions. Take the example of disturbed academic sessions and recurring postponements of examinations. The one obvious reason is that students are not sufficiently occupied during the session, with the result that at the end of it they find themselves terribly ill-equipped or even unequipped for the examination. If there is regular class work and the students are properly engaged in it, they will hardly find time to waste in non-academic activity. If there are regular assignments given to them and care is taken to check them regularly, it will keep the students sufficiently

busy and they will find no time for mischief. Then there are extra-curricular activities. Dramatics and debates, seminars and symposia, societies and clubs, games and light entertainments that must keep the students pleasantly and meaningfully involved in the pursuit of a balanced education of the mind, the heart and the body.

Mere examinations are not a correct evaluation of a student's accomplishment. Examinations fail to bring the desired results because they are conceived as periodic activity. In education examination and evaluation are continuous processes. This could not happen in a situation where education is conceived not as an academic proposition, but as an administrative problem. Instead of taking care of their studies, administrative measures were adopted to appease "the student power". Courses of studies were tailored to suit them. They were put on a large number of committees so that they were busy in attending meetings all the time and found no opportunities to take care of their studies, or even attending classes; examinations schedules were left to their discretion. They were in fact exploited individually as well as collectively. Student leaders were given a veto power in the affairs of their institutions. They recommended admissions, supervised the disbursement of stipends and scholarships, ran the transport system and were provided conveyance for private use. All the unreasonable demands of the students were conceded to. Geysers were provided in the hostels, in a society where this luxury is not even much heard of in the best establishments. They were even given power over the teachers and they decided their appointments, promotions and even expulsions. Once the administration fed this "student power" to make it into a Dracula, it started using that for furthering its own ends. The heads of the institutions with their conterie perpetuated themselves in power by submitting to the demands of the students, which were almost always unreasonable. It was this policy that threw the semester system in a quandary. When the

administration succumbed to the student power in such an abject manner, some teachers also sought alignment with the power factions among the students, thus sharpening polarization in educational institutions.

No scandal is intended by recounting these malpractices, which anyhow, give only a very sketchy view of the corruption that ran riot in the seats of learning for many years. Had even the basic requirement 75% attendance been strictly imposed upon the students and those falling short of it had been barred from taking the examination, things had not deteriorated to this extent.

Frequent deficits in the university budgets were also a rumoured consequence of the general mismanagement of affairs throughout. It was generally rumoured that budget heads were not properly and strictly maintained, and money was utilised from any budget head to meet the demands of the students. Examiners frequently waited for long periods to get their remunerations for lack of funds, though earnings from examination fees should normally be sufficient to meet examination expenses.

All these factors still persist, and will influence the students' societies when these are organised under the newly proposed arrangement. Corruption always trickles down from the top. Abuse of power is the major cause of all malpractices. It is therefore very important to make a thorough study of how the students unions were humoured and exploited by the administration. The purpose of this short analysis is to bring home the point that whatever politics was there among the students it could not have brought so much ruin to academic institutions had the administration of these institutions not been a party to it. This is also borne out by the fact that all the institutions were not so much corrupted as some of them. It is therefore earnestly proposed that a thorough enquiry be instituted into the running of the institutions, particularly the

universities, and more specifically the Punjab University which was the worst hit during the last 15 or 16 years. The terms of reference of this enquiry must include the policy of admission, schedules of examinations, discipline, appointment, promotion, transfer and suspension or dismissal of teachers, audit of university accounts and suspension of extra-curricular activities. Without such an enquiry the nature and extent of corruption of the students unions cannot be assessed, and consequently no healthy policy of running students unions can be evolved.



❧ Chapter 03 ❧

Duality of Standards



We hear so much of the English medium and the Urdu medium schools these days. This is a rather new development and entirely a post-Independence phenomenon. There was no such distinction between the schools before the partition. Even the schools run by the Missionaries followed the same syllabi as those run by the Anjumans. The government schools, too, followed the same system. Now in Pakistan all government schools, barring a few public schools, impart instruction in Urdu while all the schools in the private sector use the English medium. This not only reflects the confusion in the National Education Policy but also shows that our avowed national objectives do not coincide with the needs and aspirations of the people. This is one aspect of the duality of standards or hypocrisy that is prevalent in all departments of life in this country. We profess to pursue what we do not need and pretend aversion to that which we so ardently desire. Urdu is vociferously declared to be a symbol of our national pride, but it is nobody's choice. Urdu medium is not a marketable commodity.

In fact there is neither an education policy nor a language policy in the country. Instead there are certain ad-hoc arrangements based purely on expediency. In place of policies there are slogans. The only education policy which has been consistently followed, at least since the days of Ayub Khan, can rightly be called 'playing to the gallery'. The system of education inherited from the British was too demanding. There

were neither resources nor facilities available to meet this challenge in the new state which was already so much pre-occupied with the problems created by the Partition. During the first “few decades after Independence the old system, however, kept going on the momentum gained before Partition. But soon the energies started dissipating. The vacuum left by the departure of non-Muslims had to be quickly filled. Doctors, Engineers and executives, and more than all these, teachers were required in large numbers. Educational institutions became over-crowded and the quality of instruction deteriorated. In the absence of a well defined policy of Education the educators were subjected to undue pressures. The ‘Public’ pressure worked on two levels. The privileged few, ably represented and backed by the bureaucracy, pulled, the strings in one direction and the large majority of the ‘Commoners’ drew it in the other. The needs and aspirations of the two classes were very different, almost incompatible with each other. The privileged class insisted on standards while the unprivileged complained of impossible standards. English became the real point of debate. While a few were highly concerned with overcrowding in classes and deteriorating academic standards, again mainly with reference to poor performance in English, there was a vast majority of those who thronged the already over-crowded educational institutions and miserably suffered from very poor pass percentage in various examinations, which were as low as 20%. This mass failure was attributed to English. Majority of students found English absolutely beyond themselves. Thus the whole nation was divided into two parties, one of which wanted more and better English and the other very little or practically no English. The strength of the former lay in the strong bureaucracy which fully backed it while the latter chose the streets to assert its strength. The government had no education policy to satisfy the two demands and was not in a position to ignore either. An education policy was therefore framed which was more a

device than a policy. The demand of standards was met by introducing Higher Secondary and 3 year Degree Course systems. The grievance against English was somewhat removed by introducing functional English. The answer to overcrowding was sought in opening more polytechnics and commercial institutions. But since it was only a device and not a policy, the Higher Secondary and 3 years Degree Course fell as soon as these were introduced. The polytechnics also didn't solve the problem since the country was not sufficiently industrialised to absorb trained man-power.

Then came the slogan of restricted education, that education specially higher education, should be restricted only to those who were capable of it and could afford it. But weak governments cannot afford much agitation. There were student disturbances throughout the country. Political parties, which were outlawed by the Martial Law saw a great opportunity in this new development and entered student politics. Specially cadre parties, which never favoured democratic institutions, saw great prospects in the new situation. With political interests coming into educational field the issue of medium of instructions was politicised and there was a great demand to switch over to the National Language as the medium of instruction. The controversy between quality and quantity and the foreign and native was resolved by encouraging the opening of private schools and restricting the number of government schools. The policy satisfied all. There was a mushroom growth of privately owned schools which without exception were all English medium schools. This brought the desired result of restricting education only to the wealthy, since English medium schools charge exorbitant fees. Those who sought quality went to these costly English medium schools while the others were herded into the few Urdu medium schools that already existed. These too were satisfied since they could now have very little of English.

It was, however, a very calculated move, since though Urdu replaced English, neither English was given up nor the status of Urdu was raised. No attempt was made in the last 40 years to enrich Urdu with modern knowledge though a great devotion was always professed for the national language. On the other hand, though standards of English deteriorated below all conceivable limits, English was never given up. This served the -multiple purpose of retaining English as a prestigious status symbol, relegating Urdu to a lower caste, maintaining standard education with the raising of standards and serving class interests.

Some people blame the planners of education for confused thinking. This approach seems to the very unrealistic and rather naive. The educators are not at all confused. They have actually devised an education policy which best suits the ruling interests in the country. Our politics is still very much dominated by feudal lords, who jealously guard their privileges and are averse to see their serfs making accomplishments which they consider to be their exclusive right. The planners have very clearly devised an education policy which guarantees a continuous flow of educated youth who will take over the reigns of the country. They come from the English medium schools. They will run the political institutions, bureaucracy, trade and commerce, and whatever industrial paraphernalia we have so far been able to gather. . These educated youth will belong to the privileged classes or will be loyal to them. For the 'rabble' there are Urdu medium schools which will be more 'slaughter houses' of the youth, as Akbar Allahbadi described them, than places of instruction. The problem of standards has been solved once for all. Standards are kept up and even improved in the English medium schools, whereas in the Urdu medium schools standards have become irrelevant. Rising and falling of standards here mean nothing since they are not to affect the socio-economic set-up of the country at all. Education in the

non-privileged institutions, including the universities and the colleges, was further destroyed by creating violence and terror through gangs of trained oadres planted in these institutions to ensure that no academic activity leading to free discussions of issues is ever permitted. Thus, all care has been taken that the rabble do not get educated and pose not threat to the privileged.

The Urdu medium schools will not be spared the onslaught of English. They will miserably fail in it, and in the various examinations their performance will remain very poor. This will serve the dual purpose of keeping them away from the citadels of power, and infuse in them a sense of incompetence and an inferiority complex which will paralyse their energies. Thus the common multitude will be entirely incapacitated and will no more be a threat to the ruling interests.

They now say that the medium of examinations in the superior Services Competitions will be changed from English to Urdu. But this too will not be of much consequence since it is not simply the medium of instruction or of examination that matters. What is important is the quality of education, and there is no access to it if you know only Urdu. Not much academic matter is available in Urdu. Even after shifting to the Urdu medium the monopoly of the better educated, who will mainly come from English medium schools, will not be threatened.

There is thus an education policy that ensures good educational standards in the English medium schools, and a process of de-education in the Urdu medium schools. In ancient India education was the exclusive privilege of the upper classes and there was a practice that if a syllable of the holy books happened to fall into the ear of a low-caste, molten lead was poured into it. Compulsory English is the lead discovered by our modern pundits. The poor students will

have the horror of English hanging over their heads and they will neither cope with it nor will be left with any time or energy to deal with other subjects. On the other hand, the same English will be like the sweet song of the sirens in the ears of the children of the privileged studying in the prestigious English medium schools.

Thus, the duality of standards of English medium and Urdu medium schools, is the education policy of a class society aimed at maintaining and strengthening the status quo.



❧ Chapter 04 ❧

Privatization of Educational Institutions



There is much talk of deregulation and denationalization these days. There are many who are keen to push the idea into reality. But at the same time those who are likely to be affected by this policy are apprehensive of its consequences. The issue is of vital importance to the nation and its pros and cons must be clearly understood before taking sides.

With specific reference to educational institutions, the demand for nationalization came from the teachers who were employed in privately run institutions. Their argument was that they were miserably exploited professionally as well as monetarily. The teachers in the institutions run by the government enjoyed many privileges. Not only they had the security of service and were entitled to pension after retirement, they enjoyed many other facilities such as medical care and convenient service rules. They could also improve their qualifications and were allowed study leave and granted scholarships for the purpose. All this was denied to the employees of non-government institutions.

The other complaint was that beside low salaries and inferior grades, the teachers in privately owned institutions had rare chances of promotions. In many cases they were even dishonestly exploited. For example, sometimes they had to sign receipts for Rs. 250/- or more but were paid only Rs. 100/-.

Still another argument, quite well conceived, was that private schools and colleges were needed under the foreign rule to preserve and strengthen our cultural heritage. With a national government at the helm of affairs there was no room for such apprehensions. Education had become the

responsibility of the state in the newly created independent country.

There were strong reasons for the nationalization of education, and the institutions were nationalized. The decision was welcomed not only by the teachers of these institutions but also by the students as well as the parents, hoping that a uniform system and standard of education will prevail everywhere since all the teachers will belong to the same cadre and will work under the same administration.

Unfortunately these hopes were belied when the very idea of nationalization was frustrated. Instead of making them accountable to the people these institutions were placed under the control of individuals, the officers of the education department, who ran these on their whim. Thus private schools and colleges were taken from their owners and handed over to others who did not even have a personal interest in their progress and development. There were neither any governing bodies nor advisory councils to oversee their working. Nationalized institutions must be run under national supervision, which means representative bodies of teachers, students, parents and the government.

During the last Martial Law regime nationalization was retained while representative bodies were abolished. This created a situation which was worse than the one prevailing before nationalization, and still much worse than that of the institutions run by bureaucrats, who at least adhered to rules.

The university was the worst hit. The 1973 Punjab University Act was amended in such a way that all powers were concentrated in a few hands. It became an autonomous body with a highly centralised power structure. The principle of the rotation of chairmanship of the teaching departments was radically changed. The term of a chairman was extended from two to three years. Moreover, a chairman could be reappointed for another term and this could be repeated for any number of terms without limit. In fact the chairmen appointed in 1980 were never rotated and they still hold these

positions. Similarly the principle of the election of the Deans of Faculties was given up in favour of the practice of nomination of the Deans. As a result those professors who could never be elected as Deans were nominated to these positions. The nominated Deans rarely enjoy the confidence of the Faculty. The university ran for years without a Syndicate or the Selection Board and sometimes with these bodies incompletely constituted. The power thus remained concentrated in a few hands and these too not answerable to anyone. The power vacuum thus created was promptly filled by the all powerful Students Union which dominated the university affairs even when it was not formally in office.

Thus, the so-called nationalised educational institutions were not really nationalized. Autonomy was turned into autocracy. And without the support of the Faculty the administration became so weak that it easily succumbed to pressure groups, and these pressure groups ultimately gave way to powerful factions among students which were patronised by the politicians and pampered by the respective administrations. Consequently there is neither any discipline in the seats of learning nor any regard for rules and regulations. The entire system has collapsed. Since there is no discipline, neither moral nor academic, there is no academic atmosphere. Class rooms are deserted and the examination centres present the rowdiest ever scenes almost everywhere.

What then will denationalization mean under such circumstances? It is not expected to bring any positive change. But it will surely affect the conditions of service for the teachers working in these institutions and will expose them to all sorts of threats, including insecurity of service, and perhaps of life too.

Instead of denationalization, it will be far better to encourage the establishment of schools and colleges, and even universities in the private sector. This will not only release the pressure of admission on the existing educational institutions which are far too short of the required number, but will also encourage a spirit of competition between the privately owned

and government-run institutions. It will help in raising the standard of instruction which has already fallen to appalling depths.

Privatization of education on a large scale will also help in improving the state of discipline in these seats of learning, since the privately owned institutions will see to it that the academic life runs smoothly and without any interruption or interference from outside. These institutions, most probably, will insist on the wearing of uniforms by the students and a strict proctorial system, which have been now completely discarded in government and nationalised schools and colleges. In competition with private institutions their discipline will also improve.

Another cause of the falling of educational standards is the dual system of the medium of instruction. Private schools and colleges invariably opt for the English medium which in now is great demand. Some private institutions may decide to compete with them by introducing high standard Urdu medium instruction. Also, on the our hand, schools and colleges may be prompted to switch over to the English medium. In either case it will prove a positive gain to education.

With the fast growing population and a still greater awareness among the people for sending their children to schools, a large number of new schools and colleges must be opened. Private organizations and individuals are keen to enter this field while the resources of the government are extremely limited. The government must encourage people and provide them incentives to participate in the spread of education in the country. This will solve most of the problems of education now faced by the people without causing undue difficulties to the persons employed in nationalised institutions through denationalization.

❧ Chapter 05 ❧

Need for Translations



English is no doubt a great hurdle in educational and intellectual development of students in Pakistan. Our students consume all their life learning English which they never do, and they have no time to do any other subject. In English the results in all examinations are very poor. In the CSS, these are never more than 2 to 3 percent. If the subjects in the CSS are taught in our own language, we can have good philosophers, historians, economists and literary critics, but unfortunately, they are not capable of it. Our constitution of 1973 laid it down that Urdu would replace English as the official language of Pakistan in the next 15 years, but this constitutional obligation has been totally ignored. Obviously, the main hurdle in its way is our bureaucracy. Our bureaucrats have only one advantage over the common people, and that is their English. They speak English. If Urdu becomes the official language of Pakistan, the big officers in government offices will have nothing by which to impress the people.

Our young people are very anxious to speak English in the “correct” accent. This reminds me of Dr. Johnson who said that if an Englishman spoke a foreign language correctly, his patriotism was doubtful. That is why the English ruled India for over 200 years, but they took care not to speak Urdu correctly. They always said *tum kiya mangta*, *tum kia karta*. They considered that it was not respectable to speak Urdu correctly.

English has become a status symbol in Pakistan. If you speak English, you are considered upper class. If you speak Urdu, you are middle class, but if you speak Punjabi, Sindhi,

Pashto, or any other native language, you are considered a person of little value. English has become a complex with us. If one speaks English, which is usually very crude, one is listened with respect. This actually is a reflection of our colonial mentality. 200 years of slavery to the British have not only destroyed our initiative, our confidence and our sense of responsibility, but even our sense of honour. This is our inferiority complex.

We cannot undertake any work on our own. We wait for orders. We have no sense of responsibility. Those who give orders are responsible. We do not even mind if we are considered incompetent. This complex is not only in the use of language, it prevails all over our lives. We think that our language, our literature, our culture and civilization are inferior to English language, literature and culture. When we do not respect ourselves, who will respect us in the world? First respect yourself then expect respect from others, is the rule. Pakistanis who go to foreign countries have a bitter experience of this as they are treated like criminals. At some airports, they are made to stand in a separate queue. They are stripped and every pore of their body is minutely searched for some narcotics there.

This is all because we are *Baboos*. The Oxford dictionary cleverly skips the word. But an internet dictionary gives its meanings as “a Hindi courtesy equivalent to English Mr “, rather euphemistically. Merriam Webster adds, rather disparagingly, “an Indian having some education in English “.It also gives this origin as Hindi Baboo, literally father. But actually, it is an abbreviation of Baboon. *Will it not be more respectable to appropriate a foreign knowledge rather than imitating it monkishly?*

The best way of appropriating foreign knowledge is translation. Recently HEC Chairman, Dr. Nizam-ud-din, said in a speech in the Punjab University English Department, that in Iran 12000 books were translated into Persian every year. I wonder how many books are translated into the Chinese

language. In Pakistan, not even one book is translated except by some isolate enthusiast.

At every forum, I have been emphasizing that translation is inevitable for progress, but nobody listens. When Fakhar Zaman was the chairman of the Academy of Letters, I persuaded him to launch a program of translations. He gave me 5 books for translations. I engaged my students on the project and made the translations and sent these to the Academy. But, unfortunately, Benazir's Government was toppled and Fakhar Zaman was no more the chairman of the academy. After that nobody cared about the books.

More recently, a couple of years ago, the Academy of Letters sent me 5 short stories for translation. I sent the translations to the Academy, but the stories were never seen in print. Neither do we want to get knowledge from others, nor are we interested in translating our literary masterpieces to others. What a hopeless situation!

Our people do know some sort of English but hardly much Urdu. I here cite two anecdotes about that. An old student told me the other day that he was much puzzled by seeing a sign board, outside a traffic police office, in Urdu. It read, *Traffic kay os*. He stood amazed for some time. Then he realized that it was an attempt to write *traffic chaos* in Urdu. Strangely enough, Police is the institution that deals with chaos and the policemen do not know what chaos is called in their own language, even though, ironically, the whole nation is in a state of chaos. Another such attempt at writing English in Urdu was noticed by my younger brother. He said that he had seen a board in a shop on which it was written, *baazar mein burhiya ko oolty aagai* (بازار میں بڑھیا کو الٹی آگئی), the old woman vomited in the bazaar. I could not get any sense of it. After a few moments, it suddenly struck my mind that the writing on the board was *baazar main barhya quality aagai* - a good quality has come in the bazaar.

How ridiculous! We cannot find a word for quality in Urdu. This shows that we do not know Urdu at all and take pride in knowing English. As for literature, no one can appreciate a foreign literature unless one has enjoyed his own language and literature. Literature has been described as a mirror of society. When we read English literature, we see only a picture of the society. But the picture is not the reality. We see only images. We cannot see relationship between the society and its pictures. When we read our own literature, we see the picture of society and we know the society, we see the relationship between them and enjoy it. *This is called the literally taste.* It is impossible to have a taste of literature if one has not read one's native literature.



❧ Chapter 06 ❧

New Challenges to Education



The latest challenge to education is the introduction of internet technology. No doubt it opens new avenues of knowledge in practically every field of life. It is surely a great way forward in the fields of pedagogy and culture. Knowledge is no problem any more. Every information about every field of life and about any person is available at the click of a button. For example, if you want to know anything about the Quaid-e-Azam, press a button and you will get everything about his life, his intellectual progress, his political achievements, his character, his interests, his hobbies, practically everything about him.

In our age, acquisition of information had been the main problem. Now it is a problem no more. Internet has saved us from the problem of non-availability of books and gleaning information from newspapers, magazines etc. But internet has also created serious problems.

In the first place it has destroyed the power of meditation. Just knowledge is not a human privilege. Animals also have knowledge and learn. Man meditates on knowledge and learns, coordinates facts and makes discoveries. Internet has made man lazy. Now men have left all thinking to the internet. They do not think now. They only follow what the computer tells them. Men have been reduced to robots. Their thinking capacity has practically died. Men have become computers.

Moreover, internet has isolated man. Every man is now locked in a small closet with his computer or cell-phone. He has been cut off from all social relations. He doesn't care about

relatives and friends. The warmth of human touch has gone out of life. Men only talk to pictures. Pictures are not the reality. We talk to our children in the USA. We see them. We also see their body language, their smiles and the tension on their faces. Still we wish that they were before us in flesh and blood.

Man has been called a social animal. Now the social has gone out of his life. He has been now reduced to a mere animal. He doesn't care for others; he doesn't feel for others. The old indoor games have practically disappeared. People no more play cards or chess. They no more tell tales. They do not enjoy anecdotes. Even outdoor games have also suffered. People have forgotten the fun of running after kites or the great excitement of seeing the Eid moon with friends and relatives. In short, the warmth of life has disappeared. Man has been reduced to a money-minting machine. Technological advancement has further worsened the situation. Technology has brought many comforts, but still more worries for men. Now everybody needs air conditioners and cars. All this needs more money, that demands more work. Man has been left with no time for satisfying his emotional, aesthetic and spiritual needs. All pleasure has gone out of life.

The very purpose of life has been forgotten. Man was created to form a society. He was supposed to care for others. As John Stuart Mill said, "Happiness cannot be the direct object of life". You can be happy only by making others happy. If you seek happiness, it will run away from you. Concern for others is no more the motive. Every man lives for himself. Money has become the only value. In the west, where this materialism has reached its peak. People after 70 years of age think of committing suicide because they neither have parents to care for nor children to love. Children do not want to live with their parents. They feel it embarrassing that even in their mature age they are still dependent on parents. In the east, people do not become so despaired of life. There are parents to take care of

and their children to give them support. Life never becomes meaningless for them.

There is, then, the big question of cyber-crime. People do not know how to use this new tool. Ironically, it is creating hurdles in the way of education. People generally live on ad hoc basis. They look only to immediate gain without realizing the long-term harms of the action. There is an alarming lack of seriousness in our young. Everyone looks for short cuts. Everyone dreams of becoming rich overnight.

I gave an assignment to post-graduate students. Almost everyone submitted the assignments, but many, most of them girls, submitted the assignments in print. I was shocked to see that they had downloaded the material directly from the internet. They had not even read what they had submitted. I returned the assignments with the instruction that these should be submitted again in ink written in their own hands. In that way, I thought that they would at least know what they had submitted. In short, IT is depriving man of the practice of writing. On the other hand, there has been a flow of help books and *Made Easys* in the market. All our education has become wholly examination oriented. Prepare five important questions and pass the exams, without gaining any knowledge of the subject. Even the teachers in the “so called academies” insist that students use exactly the same answers as are given in the “notes”. Our education is no more education. It is all a rote business.

There has been another alarming development. I was approached by a senior lady bureaucrat. She told me that her daughter was studying in the USA. She had been given a thesis to write. She told me that her daughter was too busy in studies. She had no time to write the thesis. She requested me to write a thesis for her daughter and made me a good offer of money. I could do nothing but apologize. It has become a lucrative profession now to write theses of the students for money, not

only in Pakistan but even in the most advanced countries of the world.

Cyber-crimes have crept into every sector of social life. Theft from ATM is quite well-known. Then, there is scandalization of the people on the social media. This is in nobody's control. It is a very good way of propaganda and misinformation. People have stopped thinking and now totally depend on social media, not only for information, but also for comments and criticism.

All this makes it necessary that awareness about social media, in particular, and internet in general, be created in the students. Even children are affected by it. They are always seen glued to their computers or cell-phones. It, therefore, becomes imperative that awareness about information technology is given right from the primary classes. It is a big threat to the social, emotional and intellectual development of the young people.

It has also become a threat to the physical health, social life and intellectual growth of a person. As for emotional need, it is going out of man's life



Razi Abedi



Razi Abedi, born in Sonapat in the East Punjab, India, had his early schooling in Delhi.

After independence, his family settled in Lahore, where he graduated with science and did MA English from the Punjab University. He also did Tripos from Cambridge.

Razi Abedi has written critical articles on the literatures of the east and the west. His particular interest is the study of Urdu literature in the context of the third world literature and the literature now being produced in the west.

He started his teaching career from cadet college Hassan Abdal and after three years in Government Degree College Rawalpindi he taught for 30 years in the Punjab University. He has been a visiting professor at various institutions in and outside Lahore.

His publications include:

- * The Tragic Vision
- * Search For Medium
- * Educational Chaos
- * Lays and Lyrics
- * Man of the Streets
- * Teesri Dunya Ka Adab (Urdu)
- * Acchut Logon Ka Adab (Urdu)
- * Maghribi Drama Aur Jadeed Adabi Tehrikain (Urdu)
- * Teen Novel Nigar (Urdu)
- * Kuch Ghazlain Kuch Nazmain (Urdu Poetry)
- * Bazar ki Raunaq (Urdu)
- * Jeevan Dhara Author Dr. Taha Hussain (Translation)
- * Aik Naujawan Shair kay Naam Khatoot Author: Rilke (Translation)
- * Anar Kay Sai Author: Tariq Ali (Translation)

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