

DISCUSSION

VALUE EDUCATION

The purpose of this paper is to offer some comments on Prof. R. Prasad's article, "Philosophy, Education and the Quality of life" published in the *I.P.Q.* Volume XXI, (No.2) April 1994.

Some of Prasad's observations are highly insightful. They are as follows : (i) Compulsory introduction of value education in educational institutions is not going to eliminate the ills affecting the Indian Society today. (ii) In the contemporary period, in India the 'Internal Values' of the entire educational process have been thrown overboard. (iii) If we wish to save the institution of education and improve upon the quality of life we have to reinstate and inculcate the internal or the processional values. In short, Prasad's concern at total collapse of values in the sphere of education and his call to return to internal values are highly appreciable.

But at the same time, Prof. Prasad has not distinguished between the values which are internal to educational process and values which are general in nature. Truthfulness, tolerance, honesty and integrity, co-operation, mutual love and affection etc. are general values which are necessary for the smooth running of a society and unfortunately these values have almost vanished from the Indian society today. That is to say, public morality is shrinking very fast and consequently, there is degeneration in every walk of life; - be it politics, bureaucracy or education. The cry for value education is symptomatic of genuine feeling of a section of sensible people to save the Indian society from total collapse. Prof. Prasad has not offered any solution as to how the broad and general values are to be inculcated in society so that public morality can be saved from utter ruin.

Of course Prasad is right in arguing that education is one of the

effective instruments of social change and if it is conducted in a disciplined manner as per its intrinsic norms and values, gradually it will have its impact felt in other sectors of society and things are likely to change for the better. There is truth in the statement. Educational institutions not only aim at creation and propagation of knowledge and thereby achieve what is known as academic excellence but they are supposed to instill a sense of general discipline so that it percolates to other spheres of life. Imagine a hypothetical educational institution where all the members of the faculty are highly competent and all the students are exceptionally brilliant. But all of them are habitual thieves and invariably indulge in corrupt practices. In short, the inmates are highly disciplined in matters of academic pursuit but highly indisciplined in conduct of their day to day commerce of life. In such a situation, in absence of general discipline, the so-called academic excellence will be meaningless and counterproductive. This is to show that academic discipline is not a sure guarantee for general discipline.

In fact, there is no dearth of cases in Indian universities today where very brilliant teachers and otherwise sound and disciplined academicians indulge in corrupt practices. Even some Vice-Chancellors have not been able to distance them from such an evil. How to eradicate such maladies affecting the society in general and educational institutions in particular? There is no single solution to it! Prof. Prasad rightly points out that no amount of sermonization on the so called spiritual values is going to save the situation. Rather, in the process, it may be counter productive.

This argument is based on the presupposition that values and morality cannot be inculcated through lectures in the class rooms but by setting examples. This can be done in two ways: (i) The elders or the seniors in the society have to lead a virtuous life i.e., socially desirable and acceptable one and those indulging in corrupt practices have to be awarded exemplary punishment. When the common man and the sensible politicians look to the teachers for guidance it is not without reason or basis. Traditionally, teaching or imparting of instruction has been regarded as a value-based and value-oriented activity. Consequently, it is believed that those in charge of educating the youth must not only be torch bearers of

knowledge but also act as the protectors and preservers of values. But they do not know that there is a near shell-out of all values in the so called educational institutions. What we need at this juncture is a very strong and enlightened political will so that the situation can be saved without allowing further erosion of social and academic atmosphere.

Teachers have to play a very significant role in this respect. To begin with, enforcement of discipline is, by and large, the task of the teachers. It is true that indiscipline inside the class room is a part of the general indiscipline in the society and the former can be checked only when the latter is brought to a check. But somewhere the break-through has to be made and it is desirable and convenient that it begins in the class room. To wait for the *Messiah* to descend upon the earth and solve our problem with a magic wand is to defer the problem. Further, as a part of value-education the present day degenerate condition of the Indian society may be discussed in detail in higher classes so as to acquaint the future citizen of the country with the actual situation. In this respect, the philosopher can play a very significant role.

Right action presupposes right knowledge or understanding. It is the philosophers along with other intellectuals who owe a debt to society in this respect. Their task is not only to contribute to enrichment of the respective fields of knowledge but also to help in bringing about desirable change in society. This is otherwise known as the commitment of the intellectuals to the society. The desired change can be brought about in two ways: (i) By presenting a critical analysis of the corrupt practices prevalent in the society and (ii) by raising a voice of protest wherever necessary and possible. Say, for instance, many of the evils relating to examination, evaluation, recruitment and promotion of undesired and undeserving persons in the centres or higher learning can come to a stop if some sensible teachers take up the cudgels in earnestness. Prof. Prasad seems not to be appreciating the reformatory role of the intellectuals along with the philosopher. He gives an impression that if teaching is done in a disciplined manner, things will automatically change. But I beg to differ from him on this point. Yes, under normal conditions, his proposal can go on very well. But

today in India, the entire society is degenerate and corrupt and to change it, the intellectuals have to perform the role of the activist along with performance of their normal academic duties. The concept 'activism' stands in need of explication. In one of its senses, activism stands for direct and violent act of interference and interruption.

In another sense, 'activism' stands for non-violent act of protest against injustice, corruption and malpractices. When we say that the intellectuals, apart from performing their assigned duties, must play the role of an activist, we mean it in the second sense. Things will not change unless teachers raise their voice of protest. But this is equally true that the teaching community, by an large in India today is corrupt and dishonest. How to get rid of it? In other words, who will bell the cat?. There is no clear cut answer to this question. Either we leave every-thing to take its natural course or we consciously and with deliberation interfere with the social process and give it a new and desired direction. However, the decision is ours.

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