

DISCUSSION

**PROFESSOR RAJENDRA PRASAD ON VALUE
EDUCATION : SOME REFLECTIONS**

Readers of the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* do remember that Professor Rajendra Prasad's thought provoking article entitled "Philosophy, Education and the Quality of Life" was published in this journal in Volume XXI, No.2, April 1994. Subsequently in Vol.XXII, No.2, April 1995 of the same journal two reactions on this article have appeared under the titles: "Professor Rajendra Prasad on Philosophy, Education and the Quality of Life: Some observations" by Dr. Abul Kasem and "Value Education" by Prof. N. Malla. I want to add a few of my observations in this regard.

I have divided my reaction into two sections. In the first section I have made certain observations on Education and the Quality of Life, considering the views of Prof. Rajendra Prasad on this issue. In the second section, I have made certain remarks on the papers of the Late Dr. Kasem and Prof. Malla who commented on the paper of Prof. Prasad.

I

Prof. Prasad argues that the role of philosophers is very much relevant to the present day world. Their relevance consists of solving some of the social issues. In the opinion of Prof. Prasad, philosophers should concentrate on some current social issues; their discussion should attract the peoples' attention to create public opinion. Philosophy being a cognitive inquiry, a philosopher could exhibit his philosophical interest by logically analysing the issues of social importance. Citing some issues of social relevance, Prof. Prasad mentions those of reservation of jobs and in enrolment in academic institutions, secularism verses religious commitment, social responsibility of intellectuals,

professional verses general morality, the social role of education as an inculcator of values etc.

Referring to the collapse of values in Education Prof. Prasad writes : "...One hears almost everyday of a *student* having used unfair means in an examination with a revolver in his under pocket; of a *teacher* having helped him with the materials to copy from or having manoeuvred his own doctorate by giving, directly or indirectly illegal gratification to his supervisor or to the examiners;..."¹

The foremost elements of Education are (1) Educator (Teacher) and (2) Educatee (student), (3) parents and (4) Management. Let us consider in this context the responsibilities of these four factors in maintaining the quality of education.

A teacher has to make himself busy with teaching and research. Unless one is a good researcher one cannot be a good teacher. So a teacher has to keep himself abreast of the latest research areas to make teaching effective. Teachers should maintain standards of education. They should not encourage copying in the examinations. In order to achieve the credit of producing degrees, research supervisors should not resort to cheap techniques such as allowing the students to copy theses from standard books. This kind of practice may allow a teacher to produce a research degree, but it diminishes the standards of education and damages the character of students. If students resort to copying and get degrees, without any hard work, they will be easily exposed and failed in the interviews.

Prof. Prasad criticises the teachers who write and publish cheap guides in the place of text books. He aptly says that "Writing or publishing a cheap help book, which makes serious study unnecessary, is as abominable as, and perhaps more than, inventing, or manufacturing, an instantly energizing drug which makes health care dispensable. The former damages the thinking ability of its reader and the latter some vital organ of its consumer".² If cheap guide books are available no student desires to study texts because studying a guide makes his task easy rather than studying a text. But a student should be aware of the fact that studying a text makes him a better knowledgeable person than studying a guide.

Similarly preparing the examination by studying the notes, dictated by the teacher makes the student dull and poor in his subjects. So the teacher should stop dictating notes to his students. If a student prepares his own notes by consulting different books in the library, he will have a better hold on his subject rather than getting by heart the notes prepared by the teachers and mechanically reproducing in the examinations. So the teacher should not dictate notes in the class rooms, specially in the undergraduate and post graduate classes. On the other hand the teacher should thoroughly discuss the problems in class and see that the student will participate in such discussions.

It is the duty of a student to work hard to maintain the quality of education. Students should make use of the facilities, provided to them such as the scholarships by different Educational bodies. Unfortunately some of the students enjoy the scholarships without attending classes. As the required attendance is linked with the sanctioning of scholarships, they used to get their attendance certificates, threatening the Heads of the Departments and Institutions. Consequently they do not score good marks as they seldom attend the classes. Moreover they resort to all violent methods to get higher marks and ranks. They go on strikes and force the management to close down the institutions. The foremost duty of students is to stop these unwholesome attitude. If they care for their studies, they can score good marks and ranks without resorting to any foul methods.

Parents also have a crucial role in maintaining the educational values. A student spends only few hours in his educational institution whereas he spends more time in his home. Home is the first school of a child and his parents are the first teachers. It is the fundamental duty of the parents to mould their children in proper way.

'Management' is another important element of the educational system. As it is the liaison body between the teacher and the student, it has to care for the welfare of these two sections. Unfortunately the management of most of the private institutions aim only at exorbitant fee collection. They never bother to improve the quality of education.

In these days it is a fashion to talk about job oriented

education, ignoring its values. Most of the present day students wish to become either engineers or doctors. Their parents also encourage such courses through paying heavy donations. They even discourage their children to study the arts subjects like Philosophy, religion and culture. It is true that a study of professional courses offer them better jobs. But more than jobs, one's education should train a student for better (ethical) living. One's education may make a person an engineer or a doctor. But what is wanted is that one should first learn how to live as a good human being. So values are more important than the type of job that one holds in society. If we take into consideration the values, the subjects like philosophy, religion and culture are preferable to the science and technological subjects. Science and technology may help for the material advancement of man, but they cannot help for his 'ethical' advancement and 'spiritual' enlightenment. Bertrand Russell rightly remarks that while the physical and biological sciences offer the goods of the body, philosophy offers the goods of the mind.³ Will Durant observes that through the medical advancement and researches science may save the lives of people in retail but it kills people wholesale through its dreadful weapons of war.⁴ To put it in a nutshell values are more important than the material and technological advancements.

Some of the internal values of Education, as Prof. Prasad mentioned are : "respecting a fellow student because of his being a fellow student and not because of his parents' social or economic status, elegance in behaviour inside (and outside) the school, law-abidingness, punctuality, cooperativeness, i.e., sharing benefits and burdens with others and consequent entailment of inordinate self-interest, commitment to complete an assignment in time, pride in academic excellence, ...etc".⁵ The value of Education consists not in the accumulation of mere bookish knowledge but in learning manners. Prof. Prasad has rightly said: "the value of discipline inculcated by an educatee may be exhibited, in later life, in his disposition to stand in a queue at the railway booking counter, or in talking gracefully with his superior who has taken a hurtful but just action against him".⁶

II

In the following lines I will take up certain points for

discussion from the paper of the late Dr. Abul Kasem who commented on Prof. Prasad's paper.

In the course of his paper Dr. Kasem remarked: "we are simply engrossed in asserting and reasserting some stale philosophical theories already propounded either in the East or in the West as purely intellectual exercise for name, fame and fortune... our philosophical activity does not reflect our life. Rather it is totally divorced from social reality and has become the monopoly of a group of so-called intellectuals".⁷

But I sincerely feel that the philosophical theories cannot be brushed aside by arguing that they are irrelevant to the present day world. The metaphysical and ethical questions posed by the philosophers since the dawn of philosophical inquiry are the need of the hour. In the present day and age we witness violence and bloodshed in the name of religion, community and nationality. Religious tolerance and moral living are not valued any more. People cheat and kill their fellow beings for selfish ends and religious fanaticism. At this juncture the questions of God, religion and morality, raised by the philosophers since ages, are very relevant. Being fed up with the mundane matters, the ancient philosophers raised the questions of 'values'. They opined that man should live for certain higher values. Of the four values, namely 'dharma', 'artha', 'kama', and 'moksa' accepted in Indian philosophy, 'artha' and 'kama' are considered lower values while 'dharma' and 'moksa' are higher values whereas moksa is considered the highest value. Socrates' criticism of the Sophists is again an inquiry into higher values of life. While the Sophists considered 'wealth' and 'power' as virtues, Socrates considered them as inferior to knowledge. Socratic ethics consists in the idea that 'virtue is identical with knowledge'. The issues raised in the ancient philosophical thought, Eastern as well as Western, are very much relevant to the present day society wherein the moral values are fast diminishing.

Referring to the degeneration of values in Education Dr. Kasem wrote that Ph.D., degrees are sold for cash or kind.⁸ I agree with Dr. Kasem who opines that standard of Ph.D. degree in the universities is not satisfactory. But I want to add that the very rules framed in universities have an important

role in the degeneration of the standard of Ph.D. degrees. Some universities insist that at least one of the adjudicators must be a foreigner whereas other universities don't have such stipulation. It is needless to say that it is not difficult to get a Ph.D. degree if one registers his work in a university where foreign examiner's adjudication is not insisted. The student generally prefers the easy way. My intention is not to belittle the adjudication of Indian examiners. What I want to focus is that when all the Indian universities have UGC a guiding body they should follow the common but stringent rules and regulations for awarding Ph.D. degrees. That will help in maintaining the quality of research in Indian Universities.

Now I will consider Prof. Malla's comments on Prof. Prasad's paper. Prof. Malla writes that Prof. Prasad's paper gave an impression that if teaching is done in a disciplined manner, things will automatically change; but he differs with Prof. Prasad on this point.⁹ The intellectuals, Prof. Malla writes "have to perform the role of the activist along with performance of their normal academic duties"¹⁰; they have to adopt the "non-violent act of protest against injustice, corruption and malpractices".¹¹

But I think that Prof. Malla's contradiction with Prof. Prasad is not justifiable. Prof. Prasad wrote in the very beginning of his essay that he shall limit himself "to discussing primarily, or almost exclusively, the role of formal education"¹². The kind of 'activism' that the intellectuals have to play apart from their normal academic duties, is not discussed in detail by Prof. Prasad as it is out of the scope of his paper. But this does not mean that Prof. Prasad is against any non-violent 'activism' of the intellectuals against injustice. In fact Prof. Prasad has implicitly suggested this when he said that philosophers have to participate in social activities and organise "a movement to protest against deforestation, or against rigging in political elections".¹³

To sum up I agree with Prof. Prasad, when he contends that philosophers should aim at solving some of the socially relevant issues through their active participation. I agree with his views on the collapse of values in education and the need to bring back them. I also agree with the discussion of Prof.

Abdul Kasem and Prof. Malla on Prof. Prasad's paper but for a few points as explained above.

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NOTES

1. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, No.2, April, 1994, p.103
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110
3. Bertrand Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 154
4. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, p. XXVII
5. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, No.2, April 94, p. 111.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, No.2, April, 1995, p. 170.
8. *Ibid.*,
9. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
10. *Ibid.*, 178.
11. *Ibid.*,
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, No.2, April 94, p. 102.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We publish herebelow a letter received from Prof. A. N. Aklujkar, Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada V6 T 1Z2, in the context of the Review of the *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Bhartṛhari*, published in the *IPQ*, January 1994 Issue (Vol. XXI, No.1). With the publication of the reactions of Prof. Johannes Bronkhorst and Prof. S. S. Barlingay to the said review, in *IPQ*, July 1994 Issue (Vol. XXI, No. 3), the matter was treated almost as closed then and there. We however publish the letter received from Prof. Aklujkar only in order to extend to him an opportunity to clarify a couple of points that concern himself in the context of the *Review*. The Editors would like to make clear that with the publication of this letter, the matter has been how treated as finally closed, and that no further correspondence will be entertained.

Chief Editor

Sirs,

The review, published in *IPQ* January 1994 issue (Vol. XXI, No.1), of *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Bhartṛhari* is unfair and imbalanced. The reviewer Dr. J. Ouseparampil has clearly not read the publication with a philosophical temperament or pure scholarly motivation. One cannot avoid the impression that he has a personal score to settle (at least) with the editors of the volume he was asked to review. Even the English expression of the review conveys an agitated mind, which, to make the matters worse, seems to have made an entirely unfounded assumption that it alone has grasped the 'issues' in Bhartṛhari's Philosophy.

Dr. Ouseparampil tells his readers that I have not taken into account, at all, Bhartrhari's theory of meaning in my Ph.D. dissertation *The Philosophy of Bhartrhari's Trikandi*. First of all, my dissertation is a subject of minor mention in the *Proceedings* he has been asked to review. So a relatively long discussion of it is irrelevant. Secondly, the longest chapter in my dissertation happens to be 'Meaning'. This one example should suffice to establish that it would not be a good use of one's time and energy to respond to the details of Dr. Ouseparampil's review.

One wrong impression that the review is likely to cause, however, should be corrected. I should receive no part of the credit for organizing the Conference and editing its *Proceeding*. All or most of the essential hard work was done by Professors Johannes Bronkhorst and Saroja Bhate, and, as far as I can judge from the reaction of the attendees and of the specialists who have read the *Proceedings*, it was done very well. Beyond contributing two papers, I played no special role.

14th July 1994,
Vancouver,
Canada.

Prof. A. N. Aklujkar

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2. Andler, Daniel and Banerjee, Parthsarathi and Chaudhari Mahashweta and Guillaune, Oliver (editors); *Facets of Rationality*, New Delhi, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 1995.
3. Bahm, Archie J.; *Epistemology- A Theory of Knowledge*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87106-3805, 1995.
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5. Chakrabarti, Kisor Kumar : *Definition and Induction : A Historical And Comparative Study*, Honolulu, Uni. of Hawai Press, 1995.
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