

173

তারিখ ... NOV. 09 1999 ...  
পৃষ্ঠা: ৩ ...

# Post-Modern Education And The Missing Dimension

M. A. Bari

**E**DUCATION and its role in aiding young people to become good citizens are at the centre of public debate in many western countries. Buzz words like 'standard', 'excellence' and 'performance' are being used extensively by experts in and outside educational establishments. Teachers and education providers are experiencing more pressure than ever before to come up with better achievements by their pupils. The fear that many western countries may be falling behind a number of developing countries has created a sense of urgency among the policy makers. The concern is rising because of the ever-increasing incidents of bullying, juvenile delinquency, racism in the campuses, drug, alcoholism, teen-age pregnancy, etc. In some countries, this anti-social behaviour is growing in an alarming rate. They are creating a big hole in the confidence of a nation's capacity to tackle these issues.

Needless to say that these problems in the campuses are not isolated from what is happening in the wider society. They are the products of many social diseases that are engulfing not only the West, but most traditional societies of the East as well. For a sound civic society these are the challenges from within. But the way these issues are addressed is definitely not going to work. Instead of adopting a holistic view, the policy makers in the West are simply resorting to piecemeal incorporate citizenship education in the curriculum and improve academic performance of the young people. Nobody would ever deny that citizenship concept such as loyalty, liberty, justice and fairness is less important in disseminating education to the younger generation. But these qualities can never be balanced and wholesome if the knowledge of the essence of human purpose on earth is excluded or sidelined from education curriculum. Campuses are not isolated from the wider societies. The prevailing values and philosophy in a country filters through her education system and as such directly affect younger generation.

technological advancement and organised institutions. Life has become fast, competitive and complex. With the rapid rise of materialism, the concept of higher purpose of life is all but lost. As a result, societies are losing many values and norms human beings hold so dear in other parts of the world. We are in an era dictated by the philosophy of moral relativism. In this moral maze spiritual bankruptcy is the inevitable outcome. There does not seem to be any absolute values and norms of life. Everything changes according to the needs and demands of people. While societies are creating needs, consumerism is influencing societies. This has given rise to global consumerism of an unparalleled strength. Human behaviour is changing accordingly. The vacuum created by the weakening of religious influence in the West over the centuries is deepening. This has now been filled with alternative but powerful 'religions', such as Secular Liberalism and Market Capitalism which can, at times, be as proselytising and intolerant as some religions used to be in the past. The overriding principle that dictates the post-modern education system in the West is to create 'good citizens'. A young human being is educated to grow up as an individual to play his/her citizenship role. Here, the idea of citizenship and identity is limited within the boundaries of mainly language and ethnicity. It is often forgotten that, in a plural society, people can prefer to identify themselves as 'faith communities'. Finding little room in the narrow citizenship concept, these groups can feel disaffected, disadvantaged and excluded. At the same time, even the minorities within the ethnic groups could feel themselves marginalised. History has also shown that citizenship can have different meaning and different dimension at different periods of history.

On the other hand, education in the West is predominantly task-centred where a student fails to get similar importance as a human being. With a bit of religious edu-

dictates the value system of life. To the die-hard secularists, religion is out-dated and illogical which promotes irrational attitude to life. Religion is no longer the 'opium' of the people, because mankind has invented far more powerful 'opium' than that in order to indulge in permissive life. So, it is demanded, young people in the educational institutions should not be overburdened with the age-old 'dogma' of religious teaching!

Not a single western country is exception in this process of religious disengagement from their social policy. As a result, the education system is geared toward promoting an indulgent and value-free philosophy of life. In this system young people do not have the opportunity to learn any higher meaning of life, e.g., accountability and responsibility as human being on earth. Life is governed and conditioned by the desire to survive and succeed. Human beings, in this philosophy, are at best rational animals, albeit an intelligent one.

Although, the Christian Church have had an alternative view of life, it has suffered century-old onslaught from many quarters and now seen, by most, as inadequate

to the modern social requirement. Their internal disharmony on many issues is also responsible for their failure to provide a consistent and reasonable model of education. The situation has worsened to such an extent that some Church leaders themselves occasionally cry out to express their frustration and impotence. The recent internal memo that the Church of England is "culturally light years behind the rest of the society" [The Daily Times] is not an isolated view of Churches' exasperation against their marginalisation in the wider society.

### Is Education All About Producing Good Citizen?

Teaching younger people to become good citizens of a country without helping them acquire universal and transcendental values is counterproductive in wider context. History has witnessed the appalling atrocities carried out by 'good citizens' of some countries

but increasingly also the disparate values of a customer-driven culture". (Sylvia West).

Although devoid of spiritual dimension, the West's material success lies in their education system which is creative and imaginative. It prepares the young people with social qualities and life skills. It is encouraging that school education has been given prime importance in the West, as they provide the foundation of a nation. It is also important to tackle the problems of under-performance through improving literacy and numeracy, reduction

of class size, ensuring equal opportunities for all, improving school leadership and teacher training, inspection of schools and education providers and use of ICT in effective and efficient manner. These standards and accountability are, of course, essential. Essential are also the partnership with teachers, parents, businesses, voluntary and statutory bodies as well as their implementation with proper planning, sensitivity and funding. But they themselves are not the panacea to the sort of social and moral ills that prevail in the society. What is fundamental for a young man and woman is the inculcation of a strong foundation, a moral and spiritual root, to which they are anchored from the very beginning of their life.

There has been recent emphasis on an inclusive education policy in some western countries. But the policies they propose are either marred by inconsistencies or unable to comprehend the depth of the requirement. The recent British government's white paper on education, "Excellence in Schools", acknowledges some of these moral requirements when it mentions that "There are wider goals of education which are also important. Schools, along with families, have a responsibility to

ensure that children and young people learn respect for others and for themselves. They need to appreciate and understand the moral code on which civilised society is based and to appreciate the culture and background of others. They



Sadar thana TNO Babu Bipul  
water.  
ties of the killers hiding under  
water body and saw the burial-  
as he was then fishing in a nearby  
Balaram survived the killing  
lost his brother Faisal.  
alive," said Balaram, who also  
ried people but they left none  
with wails and yells of the horri-  
rina Gopal village had filled  
"The morning breeze of Ha-  
said.  
affected districts with arsenic  
contamination of tubewell water.  
About 350 tubewells have been  
sealed due to high percentage of  
arsenic in water. About 3,000  
people are suffering from various  
arsenic related diseases, learnt  
from reliable sources.

**3 deer, hides-skins of 11**  
Hunting rampant in Sundarbans  
Mallab-269, Faridganj-138,  
are Chandpur-137, Hajiganj-167,  
wise break-up of these tubewells  
ment Bank (ADB). The thana-  
financed by the Asian Develop-  
estimated cost of Taka 4.24 crore  
Pourashavas in the district at an  
instated in seven thanas and six