

## National culture

Heads of different colleges and madrasahs attending a fifteen-day training course on "educational administration and management" have recently been reminded of their responsibilities in upholding our national culture and education. If culture as sages say, is the light emitted by education and knowledge, those at the helm of affairs have a truly difficult task to accomplish.

Young though we may be as a nation, our cultural roots go back in history so ancient that few remember how or from where certain traditions have come to be part of our cultural heritage. Ours is a predominantly folk culture adhered to by the majority, on which influences from the outside world is brought in by only a handful of people at the upper stratum of society. It is at this junction that educationists, intellectuals and opinion-makers have to exercise their wisdom in making a conscious choice.

In this twentieth-century computer age it would not do to be insular, but neither would it be wise to allow the indiscriminate infiltration of alien attitudes and ideas for which Bangladesh is psychologically not ready. The contention of the older generation is that there is an obvious erosion of traditional values in Bangladeshi society, that honesty, integrity, respect for people and love of the land no longer sway our minds. Those who would analyse the situation blame, among other things, the negative influence of media entertainment, the low standard of education prevailing in the country. On most counts the complainants are partly right.

Thanks to our poor educational standards, our degree-doling institutions manage to produce mindless graduates who are easily drawn to the disease of blind consumerism. With the video-boom, all kinds of cheap and shoddy shows are available to whet the basest appetites, and encourage violence and crimes. The remotest Bangladeshi village we are told is not safe from the video-businessmen who make fortunes through pornographic films, polluting the minds of the viewers, and giving them an unjust idea about the social and sexual ethics of the west.

It is unfortunate that the good things in "alien" cultures are thus unwittingly screened out while the scum is allowed to influence the entertainment-hungry people. Among the grave consequences of such insidious influence is psychological disorientation, spiritual degradation, and double standards in socio-religious activities.

The nation's leaders must weigh the evils which apparently innocuous video-shows can propagate. In order to bequeath a healthy cultural heritage—to future Bangladeshis we must begin now to protect the minds of the present generation by assiduously screening all entry of films and publications and permitting only those that would enhance quality of life. Education, in this, must provide the moral strength to choose and discard outside influence while preserving our own culture.

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