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Educating The Nation

Everyone today recognises the importance of education, even for the most desperately poor, in order to merely survive in the modern world. Neglect of this vital area over the past two or three decades is partially responsible for the declining standards we see all around us. Just to recover from the handicaps we made for ourselves will require our wholehearted attention for still some time to come.

When we see the condition of our people steeped in ignorance and superstition, lacking in knowledge, in many cases incapable of taking care of their own welfare, we cannot and must not console ourselves by repeating cliches which often have no substance in fact and which make us complacent. So what if the average American does not know where Bangladesh is on the map—he knows where America is and for him that is enough ! How many of our people know where to find America on the map ? Or for that matter their own country ?

Education has become pivotal for all other matters which concern all of us intimately. Education influences a family's health, it affects marriage patterns and family size and, most of all, it builds esteem, esteem for one's self and the esteem of others. With education comes the ability to earn for oneself according to one's need and to have a greater control over one's destiny. And most important, it is the stepping stone to better things. No government can morally deny its people a right to education and this is why it is considered one of the basic rights—and this applies equally to men and women.

In the desperate condition we find the nation today if we are to turn this around each and every one must be their brother's keeper. Only through combined efforts to eradicate illiteracy shall we overcome our handicaps and those who know how to read and write must impart that knowledge to others who, through no fault of their own, remain ignorant. For those who have the opportunity for education and learning we must put aside the ideals which put money before knowledge and encourage the search for learning. To do this we need to put our own house in order first through arousing national interest in schools and schooling. By raising the standard of education instead of bewailing it as we do we shall at least have done our bit in the struggle for survival. Unless we can create a demand for education, by example, we shall have failed the younger generation and thereby the nation.

Education has been one of the most neglected areas both in quantum and sadly in quality and having fallen behind in the race for emancipation we can only continue to come in a poor fourth in world affairs unless we do something concrete about it now, for time itself is against us. Despite cries falling in the wilderness since at least the coming of Bangladesh there has been little done to arrest the decline in standards and reinstate education as something most desirable among men.