

Education for the future

Professor (Dr.) BM Hegde

“We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.”

Swami Vivekananda

Rote learning and memorising has become the norm in the present day set up in schools and that continues even in higher education. Students find it easier that way to pass and get 100% to go up the ladder of today’s educational system which aims just at making *wealthy careers* instead of the right variety of education to make *healthy minds*. This is a sordid boon for the future generation. This kind of education makes human kind to sell their souls to the devil. Education should make a student to have social conscience and also social consciousness. This is lacking totally in today’s set up. Education’s goal should be to train young minds to act *“justly, skillfully, and magnanimously”* under all circumstances.

In the olden days there were civics classes in schools where students were given training in their social responsibilities and obligations. Today in the rote learning and fact collecting

education there is no room for anything other than memorising facts to get top grades in the examinations. Our examinations are structured to encourage rote learning. The atmosphere is further vitiated by the mushrooming of tutorial colleges some of which have become larger than the colleges and schools! I still remember the days when going for tuitions was looked down upon as a blot on the student’s career. On the contrary, today not going for tuitions is considered risky. Schools as well as tutorial colleges encourage memorising facts as synonymous with education. How did we get to this state and why?

Education for a job is the slogan today and people think it is a waste of time learning things like morals, ethics, civics, literature, music, arts and languages. Some people are even going to the extent of saying that the curriculum must be drawn up by the industries

* Professor B.M.Hegde, Padma Bhushan Awardee - 2010, Cardiologist & Former Vice Chancellor, Manipal University.
Email: hegdebm@gmail.com

to suit their needs. This kind of tunnel vision is very dangerous should the recipient lose that particular job. She/He is not fit for any other job. Teachers also are keen on this system to continue as rote learning method will be easy for them to assess the students at the end of the day. Learning and thinking might be difficult to assess with the present kind of fact finding examinations. What good purpose does the present day examinations serve is anybody's guess? The present examinations give room for cheating, in fact they encourage cheating, which is not difficult with the fact finding examination systems.

Professional education sans humanities is, in the long run, counterproductive. We need to have problem solving type of examinations where students should be allowed take all their books if they want so that cheating could easily be eliminated. But I think the resistance will come from teachers as both putting together such an examination as also evaluating takes longer time and is also more troublesome for the teachers. They need to think, a capacity they did not develop in their own training. Professional education today, devoid of moral values taught, has resulted in large scale cheating in medical and other sciences.

Large numbers of published scientific papers even in the leading journals are being retracted. The reasons are not far to seek.

They are mainly due to "improved plagiarism detection systems, as well as negative factors like the potential for increasing scientific dishonesty." From the large PUB MED data base nearly 2047 retractions were studied. The study showed that more fraud is detected these days than in the past. While only 30 retractions occurred during 2002, in the year 2011 the number has gone up to 400 while the rate of increase in the total number of papers published has just gone up 44%!

The most dangerous thing that is missing in medical, nay any, education is the lack of ethical and moral contents. We must teach students not to lie to their conscience. They must also be told that it is better to fail than to cheat. How else would one tolerate senior professors telling white lies to make enormous amounts of money from drug companies even by creating new (non-existent) illnesses to facilitate drug companies to sell their drugs? A recent example is the invention of ADHD-attention deficit hyperactive disorder, in children where millions of children must have been given dangerous chemical molecules for a non-existent disease. This was admitted by Late Professor Leon Eisenberg to the media just before his death.

I wonder if one could inculcate ethics into any one, including doctors, from without if they have not been ethical to begin with. The

integral part of an educated man's life should be ethical for the common good of human kind. Man is not born unethical. If our early educational system does not bring out the best in us, I do not think we will transform either in the medical school or higher educational system. Everyone talks about being legally correct. What is legal need not be ethical but what is ethical is always legal.

Man's greed and proclivity for comfort will eventually destroy this world! Basic value based education should try to transform man into a social being with both social conscience and social consciousness. Recent revelations in the New York Times that nearly half of Harvard Medical School faculty is on the regular pay roll of the pharma industry should make us sit up and take note although I had been writing for years that this unholy nexus between the academia and the industry has to stop in all dimensions. Harvard has been ranked "F" in a recent survey. If society becomes ethical, doctors, naturally, will be ethical.

In one of the recent BBC debates on ethics they had chosen Tulasidas's Ramacharitamansam (Tulasidas's history of Rama from the great Indian epic, Ramayana) as the core content for the debate. I think Mark Tully was one of the debaters. I do not remember the full list of others involved in

the debate. Ramayana, it was claimed, was the only epic in the world that showed both godliness of man and manliness of God in one book! That very basis of the ageless wisdom of India (sanaatana dharma) proclaims that society could survive and run only on the two wheels of TRUTH and ETHICS, the latter of the highest order applied one hundred per cent in all our dealings. ("*Satyam; brihad ritam ugram; vishwam dhaarayanthi*" in original Sanskrit from the Rg. Veda).

The ethical dilemmas are very important but they pale into insignificance compared to the enormity of the importance of the medical fraternity selling their souls to the industry. Even the statistical science of medicine, trying to sell the relative risk reductions in place of the absolute risk reductions in all published RCTs (Randomised Controlled Trials), is a nice camouflage to hide our sins. Earlier we stop being hypocrites, swearing by the Hippocratic Oath, the better.

My greater worry is the class system that is developing in education these days. People take pride in their Doon School or Harvard like University type of education where they are not in touch with reality. They are today's upper castes in education. They have lots of disadvantages to be in touch with the masses. They are not aware of the need to be altruistic as they have never seen nor experienced poverty.

This class system will be akin to the caste system in India. That was one of the reasons why bussing black kid to white schools and vice versa was tried a couple of decades ago in Boston city. Once one gets into these elite schools her/his further growth will be smooth as she/he gets plenty of opportunities to improve the grades which are not available in ordinary schools. Unless one is a dunce, after getting into these elite schools either by merit or through money power, one automatically becomes an “A” grade student. This is bad for an inclusive growth in the country.

If creativity and thinking are not encouraged in schools and colleges, soon we will be a country of mediocre copy cats which, we already are today, anyway. Thinking, refutative research to take knowledge forwards etc. will be the things of past children’s bedside stories only. Education in the private

sector has become a big business already and corporate houses are keen to get into this risk free business. Government institutions are anything but bad examples for others. The babudom in charge of education in the country has no idea what education is all about. They just want to enjoy their powers and in the bargain get wrong people to man the administrative bodies through influence and/or nepotism. The Universities are suffering as their heads will have to wait in a line outside politicians’ offices either for extensions or retaining their chairs. It is sad that Indian Universities are yet to make to the “first hundred” list in the world. I do not consider that as any shame as these rankings also have strings attached to them.

“Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all, love.”



“Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders and know that you are the creator of your own destiny.”

“A little library, growing larger every year, is an honourable part of a man’s history. It is a man’s duty to have books. A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life.”

“Do all the good you can : to all the people you can; in all the ways you can; as often as you can; and as long as you can.”

“Treat everybody with politeness, even those who are rude to you. For, remember, that you show courtesy to others not because they are gentlemen, but because you are one.”

“Path Paved as a Teacher”

Smt.Radha Kulkarni, President of India Award winning teacher and educationist