



National education: A policy from retrospect-II

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BUT the Muslims, in addition, have been obliged to carry a tradition of contradiction through its protective madrasah education. Bengal Muslim educational culture has grown around this contradiction. In a microcosm we saw this manifest in village Daulatpur.

The issue of two languages as seen here had the deepest association with one educational child is taught some Arabic or a Hindu child Sanskrit albeit orally within their respective communal system. Every literate child has been expected to have learned some English as early as the opportunity had provided him. However, after the independence there has been a greater public interest about the national language and a tendency to view English as vestigial of British colonialism and the legacy of foreign domination. On the other hand, specifically the rural leadership is keen for recognition as one who has held the Muslim society together through local institutions and communal charity. When education has devolved a public responsibility why not then madrasa and makhtabs be a part of the state system of education is the sort of question that puzzles the rural majority. The urban elite and the middle class, a democratic minority, remain convinced about the place of English in the progress and prosperity in life. They champion Bangla as the medium of public education and prefer for their own wards additional tuition in English or even an outright English education. And this group has no objection if religious education too is provided under private cost or communal philanthropy, as the instance of founding the

Quranic school in Daulatpur. A survey of educational institutions in Dhaka City carried out under the auspices of the government in November, 1982 showed more than a third—250 out of 710 schools as tutorials and taught in English medium (K.G.—type). Among others, there were 254 primary schools, 151 high schools and 39 colleges. (Problems of the Educational Institutions and the State of Education in Kintergarten and similar type of Dhaka City, November 1982) The K.G.—type schools had in that year 44,567 enrollment and seats strength of over 50,000. The tuition paid was up to Taka 500 per month while the city's primary schools were free. The report claimed that "most of these institutions are in fact schools which offer organised class room teaching to their students." It is most interesting that when a forced national debate about the languages to be taught in primary education was raised through the media, a survey of 1,259 Dhaka sample (teachers: 297, service holder: 599, businessmen: 249, and others 114) showed 58 percent support for the K.G.—type schools and that they should be run in English medium 72 per cent of the respondents agreed that those institutions had been established to cater to the needs of children from

well-to-do families; 80 per cent thought that the English taught in those schools was satisfactory. This is a new contradiction—almost class based—in the culture of our education. In search of our long answer, I have traced three major elements in our educational background: (1) the religion-based education which is for the most part oral (2) modern education with emphasis on English-language and (3) the post-liberation emphasis on vernacularization of all education. Each is a contradiction to the other and between (2) and (3) the urban elites and the middle class hold two attitudes—one public and another private.

In 1982 a debate was initiated about national education. It had many aspects and a great amount of methodological work behind it. One of the methodological input was a national study of popular opinion about education. Over seven thousand people (7159 valid respondents) responded, of whom 55 percent was urban, and 45 percent, rural. All the respondents were literate of whom 86 percent was college graduates. In this sample 79.2 percent supported the teaching of a religion based language and 59.8 percent, the teaching of English at primary level. (Shiksha Bebozha Sanskar-O-Pinar-Binyas Kaipe' Janamat Jachai Report, Banbeis, Jan-1984). This belied the conten-

tion of the language agitators. Further, it also suggested a sharp difference of views of the majority against that of the public attitudes of the urban middle class.

However, on account of the vocal political opposition and other conditions, the debate on education was violently throttled. Since then the rural majority has quietly gained most support for the madrasah based education. Otherwise education has turned a non-issue alike with the students and the authority. Occasionally one hears or reads statements from high places. Sometime they are about reforms or, they are various announcements. Apart from developing the score of University colleges and the Jalalabad Science University, the government has recently been talking about one/two affiliated Universities an open University and a relocated Islamic University. One also hears more liberal attitudes of the government about English teaching and English medium tutorials. However, not much is heard about the remedial of educated unemployment, about effective curricula and the critical shortage of fund; and nothing is heard about the two stream education when it is now one society.

The first consideration about education is education for what. Broadly, it is

some of the critical and chronic problems of our education are (1) ineffective curricula, (2) educated unemployment and (3) shortage of funds. With these facts in view one might ask if it is not possible to bring the four institutions first into one stream and then structure them rationally to ensure the religious and cultural process and to provide some appropriate skills for employment. That would immediately generate some savings within the current resource which could be better utilized to support improved methods of teaching.

Of late the government has taken a laissez-faire attitude to defuse its responsibility, which in its present style congenitally incapable to discharge. The fate that met Sharif to that of Noor Khan and even of Qudrat-i-Khuda (as the violent overthrow of the elected government and the promulgation of the martial law immediately followed the adoption of Khuda) commission report in the retrospect, is the most convincing testimony. The only prospect of a national scheme of education lies first in the act of an agreement about the minimum basis and the direction to be given to our social process. This task, I believe, is more than a methodology or an array of facts; it is political. How long must the country wait to have the right political climate to enable it to take the political decision and to inaugurate a national educational process in the interest of long term development.

(The views are particularly the writer's own).

to support cultural development and intellectual growth of the concerned people. Then, it has to equip the younger generation to engage in economic activities, and finally to enable technological and cultural advancement to ensure progress and a continuing higher quality of life. For all these there is a need for a minimum agreement about the ingredients of our national education. They are there in our background. The village Daulatpur manifests them all including the critical shortage of funds and its chronic misuse.

In Daulatpur we saw the "compulsory" part of the education was the transmission of religious behavior and practices which are imparted at Forkania. The high school is the symbol of modernization. It enjoys the the best prestige and relatively more resources. The madrasah now teaches some of the same subjects as taught in the high school mainly to qualify for 70 percent public fund subsidy on teachers salary. This has happened within the past decade and mostly since 1982. Without the government equalizing subsidies to madrasahs many of those perhaps would have folded up by now. The village primary school is one of the oldest in Daulatpur, and it is all free from class I to V. Every one would agree that