

Character formation: as an object of education

Education is one of the most important issues for the Governments worldwide. For everybody knows that a way to progress for any nation is through the path of education. Governments as well as the NGO's are desperate to raise their literacy rates. And it should be for education is one of the very basic needs and rights of a man.

What is education? Is it a way of getting knowledge about everything, is it a mechanism to prepare forces of doctors, engineers or any other technicians. Education is in fact a lifelong process. It includes not only the knowledge of the things surrounding, of hidden truths but it is also a process which differentiates man from animal life. From the jungles and caves man has progressed to this advanced and modern world. Is it what we all mean with education? The answer given by any ordinary man would be a simple 'NO'. For the scope of education is not just linked with the scientific discoveries or inventions, no doubt these are the very important aspect, but education on the other hand is very much linked with the progress of the moral world of man. It deals with the advancement of ideas which has brought tremendous changes in the moral, social, and political in short in all fields. It is related with the thoughts and values as well as the behavior of the educated person which he reflects in his daily routine life.

Character formation as being the object of education is indeed a very deep and complex issue. It deals with individual and the whole system of his thoughts, beliefs, habit, values and all those part of his personality which are reflected in his behavior. What is character? It is the most presentable part of our personalities. Though it is characterized by the individual's personal values, thoughts and moral conduct but it also depends on the individual's ability to reflect all these things into his daily life. The example is very obvious. If someone believes in something but is unable to bring it into practice the same cannot be called the part of his character, for he is not exhibiting it in his daily interactions. For human beings are judged by how they present themselves for the inner self is not seen from outer shell. So character formation demands not mere including some basic principles, values or ideas but to bring these certain ideas into daily practice.

So as we see the Education is a process which is not a medium of giving some philosophical or technical ideas but it should be first and foremost related to the object of character formation. And this process continues till death. For once we are able to know the importance of education the desire to rise above and above increases. Education taken in the most formal way adopts such patterns as to suit

or link itself with the particular environment, needs plus the age of recipient. It on a formal level is divided between primary education, secondary education and higher education. AT primary and secondary level it concerns itself with the introduction of some basic universal values to the children at the same time introducing simple and most obvious fact and principles of different important fields like mathematics, social sciences, and language studies and with the progress of phase it deals more with the deeper and deeper issues till higher education which concerns itself more with the particular field chosen and making one proficient with its intricacies and depths enabling him to carry out his own research basing it on the work of his predecessors and thus finding new horizons of these fields. So education no doubt deals with the advancement of different fields but its basic object is to build character on certain bases so that to produce overall better human beings.

The value of education and its role in human life can be understood when we see the importance Islam has given to it. Education has a very prominent place in Islam. Islam gives primary importance to education and asks its followers to educate themselves throughout their lives. For human life is always in continuous process which ends with death. It is more like a journey where one passes from different phases each phase teaches you something. Sometimes one observes and learn from others and sometimes one has to earn the learning at hard process through experience. So its a never ending process like life and ends with it. Islam raises the status of humanity and calls man the deputy of God on earth. And this status has been awarded for no other ability than his knowledge and ability to educate him. Infact there are numerous verses in Holy Quran where the importance of education is emphasized calling Muslims to educate themselves. In fact a person who died in a struggle to acquire education is called a martyr. Muslims are asked to acquire education even if someone has to travel far off for it. Here it must be kept in mind that that when Islam asks Muslims to get education it is because of the benefits that can be achieved in practical life and the changes it brings in the personality of a person. The first and foremost object of education according to Islam is character building for it is cleared that ideas devoid of practice are of not value. No matter how much knowledge a person has acquired but if it does not reflect from his character and daily conduct it better had not been acquired. The very personality of Holy Prophet (PBUH) is a source of inspiration for the Muslims, for here we see not mere theories but the practical application of the professed values in all circumstances. It shows that no matter how circumstances gather against you but one, if equipped with knowledge is never deviated from the path of truth and virtue. From Islamic perspective education is not related to some ideas of beliefs but it encompasses almost everything, behaviors, dealing with others in all sort of matter from personal to business, with the rights and the duties of a person in different spheres of life being a citizen, a family member and the skills and expertise that helps man to satisfy his needs of knowing about world as well as to earn a

respectable living. In fact Quran urges the man to interpret the signs that God has created for him so that he can understand the creativity of his God. Islam being a practical religion related itself with the physical as well as the spiritual life of its followers and shows how by getting knowledge man can exalt himself in both spheres.

So education, being so important for nations, countries and states, what are the areas that it covers ? First of all it deals with the individual telling him the basic answers of the questions he needs. It on the other hand links him with his respective family and gradually from particular areas society, region, country continent to the entire universe. It tell him the basic principles and values of living with others in relating him with others it clears some of his duties and rights as well as of the others. It characterizes the collective thinking of a society, draws some codes of conduct and in a way form a collective behavior. It also imparts to individual knowledge in different fields enabling him to earn as well as to make his own and of many others lives more comfortable. That is the key to human progress till now. Each subsequent generation do its part of work basing it on the ground of its previous generation's work and thus they should make their lives better materialistically as well as spiritually. For if confined to the mere one of these aspects it fails in its objectives. So these are the areas that it covers but still the most important part of education remains to form better human beings. For many a scholars averred that the purpose of education is not only to create better doctors, engineers, politicians but above of these all to create better human beings. To base their character on such lines of universal values and principles es that they are better in all ways as compared to an uneducated person.

But if these objectives of education were understood and practiced then certainly we would have been living in a different world. Materialistically man has progressed well but where do we stand morally. Are we better human beings or citizens or better responsible member of our society. Had the character building aspect of education practiced and applied than surely our societies would be glowing with the shining personalities embodiment of ideas and practice. But it is not the reality that we see around us.

Reality on the other hand is much bitter and worse. We are civilized as we have evolved the civilized way of satisfying our base desires. Our society may have more but not less vices that were found in previous so called dark ages. Our society overall is devoid of such values of tolerance, patience, discipline, truth, honest and righteousness. There is no difference between the so called educated men of our society and the ignorant. It can be easily analyzed by conducts usually exhibited at roads and in lines. Education if tell the difference of right and wrong then why are their so many mercenary officers as they are more educated .the fact is that the more one is educated the better he knows the ways to whiten his black money. The only picked the things that help them to disguise their base values. We are

more prone to the acts of intolerance and impatience than our previous generations. SO what is the reason of this deplorable fact are we forgetting the real objectives of education.

The main reason behind this situation seems to be the objectives we have attached to education. Education in our society is a character building tool anymore we are more concerned with the other benefits that are achieved through education. This include the tint of materialism which has coloured our views and ideas. Education is a greatest mean to earn more handsome. the main objective tagged with education is to achieve the materialistic benefits that it offers o. On a very simple level it is more a routine.

This trend can be verified from the number of students excelling in fields like medicine, engineering other physical sciences but no change in character building has been seen. Money earning is being given the supreme importance. No doubt money is one of the important realities of our lives but its mere one aspect of life and not life itself.

If we put this objective of money earning at a side then what we see is a loss of objectives. Beside money earning no more objectives are usually attached consciously to education. It has become more like a routine. There may be somewhere in the back of our minds a view of tracing our children to differentiate between right and wrong but that usually is not the driving force nor we ensure the same for them. Gaining more prestige can also be a motive beside other things as an educated man do has a kind of respect of his own in our society.

Now comes the question of the responsibility. who is responsible for this deplorable state of affairs. why are we unable to recognize and render importance to the most needed objective of education which is character formation. There are several factors responsible for this condition.

At this age of machine and speed we simply have no time to ponder over and device some objectives for ourselves. We have a trend incur society where we may plan our future in material term but give no importance to what we want our children to be like a human being some years after. What kind of a society member or a citizen he will be . There is a wide spread lack of such considerations.

Again just to be with the pace of time materialistic views have overshadowed everything else. The social values has been hijacked by class privileges and social status. Society is clearly divided among different classes, upper, middle and lower and these classes are defined in terms of their materialistic status. Rich are busy in gaining more and consolidating their position, poor are busy in making their both ends meet as well as to earn as much as they can for their respectable existence. for in this society Respect has been somewhat closely associated with

money. So in such a materialistic society ideas and values are not seemed to be much important.

But still if education (so wide spread) should have done something to improve the situation and if it has failed then there must be some problem in formulating its policies and patterns.

Educational system can be to some extent hold responsible for its responsibility to impart education along with its all objectives and purposes. And it is failed in this purpose due to many reasons. One is that it has been yet failed to device the proper curriculum to achieve such noble objectives as character formation. Though there had been some frequent changes (minor ones not drastic) but the overall pattern has remained the same. We have been witnessing the same curriculum for years without any improvement though we can see that the same is insufficient for character building purpose of education. There is a lack of practice. Our examination systems are thus advised that importance is given to theory and ideas as how well they are memorized and it's more a test of memory. Our examination system has raised a custom of cramming. Students are required to reproduce some important points but no importance is given to the practical application of these ideas. For this teachers are also responsible to some extent. The children learn more from what they see than what they are told. Mere coming some values as honesty, truth, love, and humbleness brotherhood will not do anything unless student see the practice of these ideas before their own eyes.

Teachers have always been the ideals of student but we are really lacking those dedicated and devotional teachers who with all their might tried to bring up a better generation. Teachers today are more concerned about their own futures and lives than understanding the fact that they have been entrusted with the most precious treasure of society. The lack of coordination between what they teach and what they practice fails to inculcate in the young minds the practical application of these value in day to day life. Then there is no uniform system of education. Especially in our country education has become a thing that can be attained at different prices. There are many different levels of educational institutions to suit one's pocket. Private institutions have made this noble purpose a business to earn more and more. There are English medium as well as Urdu medium schools but both has failed to achieve the basic objective of character formation.

Because of these many reasons education has lost its real value and significance. Now there come the question that how to improve this situation. First of all realization of the problem is very important. If we assume that there is no problem then of course circumstances will continue to move in descending direction. We need to understand the importance of education right from the beginning in a very new way. It has to be understood that the purpose of

education is not to gain the ability to earn more. Though we cannot reject this objective categorically but it is not the primary objective. It may be an important benefit of education but the primary objective of education is and should be to inculcate such universal values and virtues in such a way that they become part of one's character and are translated in their daily lives. If it does not bring a positive change in the mind and behavior of human being that it is not fulfilling its real purpose.

Curriculum needs to be devised on altogether new lines to cater this objective. There should be more stress on moral values and their application. It should be made more interesting and up to date for the coming generations.

Teachers should realize their role in this scenario and must understand their duties as well as the graveness of their work. They need to adopt a behavior with children that further educate them and in fact present the practical embodiment of the values they are teaching. They should inculcate the values of tolerance, honesty and discipline in the future generation.

Examination systems are too devised in such way that instead of testing the cramming abilities of the students they are to test their understanding of the curriculum.

So education if devoid of its purpose of character formation is of no value whatsoever. We, at this age of machine and technology are left far behind in field of morals and human values. Its high time to consider this problem and make strenuous efforts to right this wrong. Its a great duty incumbent on our generation towards later generations. A human character is the most important subject of education and by making our educational system able enough to perform its due role in the making of societies we would render the greatest service to the world than all discoveries and inventions. Education must be separated from the materialistic values and desires. Its the most needed change in our society as it is lacking in the required values of tolerance and honesty. By achieving these values collectively we will advance on the path of progress as a proud and able nation