On Going to School

Abdul Qayyum

LAST night I dreamt I was at school again, a boy barely 12 years old filling out his admission format a desk in the anteroom next to the dining hall. The year was 1944, the school : the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College, Dehra Dun (India). I hardly knew how to fill the form and so helping me with it was my wife, my constant companion for over 37 now of my 60 years! The school itself, as the dream progressed, was a blend of four : two that I attended (RIMC, 1944-47; Aitchison College, Lahore 1947-50) and two that I helped establish (Cadet College, Hasan Abdal, Pakistan, 1954; Cadet College, Faujdarhat, Bangladesh, 1956-58).

Dreams being what they are, there was an overlap of images, as mystifying as Mr Watson operating his slide-rule in the physics laboratory, checking out the answers of a lifetime in my dream. Mr Watson came and went in a flash, concealing as he had always done the miracle of the slide-rule. The more enduring figure in the dream was Mr Catchpole : my principal in Dehra Dun and at Hasan Abdal; my friend, philosopher and guide at Faujdarhat.

In the dream, Mr Catchpole kept smiling as we struggled to fill up our admission forms. We were not doing too well, more confused than any bunch of youngsters that I have known in real life. Huddled in various corners of the ante-room, in mixed groups, were many 'old boys' From Faujdarhat, there were only Mr Catchpole and me — all of us furiously engaged in filling up our admission forms!

What came of the forms I do not know, because in between we had gone for a stroll in the spacious lawns of the RIMC and Aitchison College, a quick 'chukkar' of the central square in all the four schools, a peep into the class-rooms and the dormitories. Suddenly, we heard the 'going'. Ali Kuli said it was time for lunch and I walked over to the rostrum for a talk at the Command and Staff College, Quetta!

That was the stuff the dream was made of. It is a dream I have dreamt many times, with many variations over the years. I was happy at school and I have been happy a lifetime, notwithstanding the pain that I have known all the way from 1947 to 1971: uprooted from the RIMC (1947), cast away from Faujdarhat (1971).

Schools have a way of seeping into our bloodstream in more ways than one. They stamp our dreams and our aspirations with the fragrance of flowers, a lesson well learnt, a game well contested whether won or lost, friendships forged across all accidents of linguistic origin or ethnic breed. This, of course, when we have had the good fortune of going to a good school. That missed, we run into twisted ways trying to undo the knots of life.

The RIMC was the finest school that I went to. Spread over a hundred acres or so of gently undulating land criss-crossed by mountain streams, it had velvet green lawns and spacious play-fields, whole banks of sweet-peas and antreniums, sparkling yellow daffodils and cosmos. There were clusters of tall eucalyptus trees, flowering shrubs of many scents and hues, long rows of well-trimmed hedges and not a single boundary wall to disfigure the landscape! Our classrooms were tucked away in one not too distant corner. In the long gallery adjoining the library we could sit at our study desks, throw open the wide windows, breathe in the crisp air, look out on the lights of Mussorie burning bright on the hilltops! Mr Hacker taught us geography with a passion that I seem to have transmitted to my son as he impatiently waits for his next issue of the 'National Geographic', ready to sail up the Zaire river or set out with the 'Prince of Travellers' (Ibn Batuta) on his epic journey to the East. "Hunters and fishermen," Mr Hacker taught us, "often go hungry, because they are never sure of their next meal." Civilisation, we learnt, calls for freedom from hunger, education and the leisure to pursue the finer longings of life. Mr Harris and Mr Kettrick taught us quadratic equations with as much zeal as they taught us to swim, play football or jump over the fence. Mr Catchpole was never tired of correcting "common English errors in the sub-continent", teaching us also to play cricket with a straight bat, seeing to it that we minded our manners as much as we minded our language. Mr Ziauddin taught us Urdu, the Maulvi Sahib how to perform our 'Salat', our seniors (Jamal Said Mian, Fazle Raziq, Fazle Haq, Ahmed Jamal et al) how we may strive to succeed with honour even when they were around! We worked hard, we played hard, and we knew nothing of politics. It was training in the abstract and in the absolute within the confines of a residential public school, learning to do well whatever was to be done and keeping away from whatever fell short of a gentleman's code of conduct. We were still small but we learnt early enough to stand up erect, to own up and 'take the can' when we strayed into error, to be modest in success, not to cringe before authority nor to pursue the expedient, not to shed too many tears over the match we lost nor forget to take to the tuck-shop the 'poor blighter' we knocked out in the boxing ring! Work, play and prayer constituted the whole of life at the RIMC. Just as well, I knew nothing of politics then. Having lived to be 60, I am glad I did not 'step into life' a day too soon.

In October 1947, an Indian Air Force Dakota flew us across from Saharanpur (India) to Lahore (Pakistan): 35 Muslim boys from the RIMC, several more from the Indian Military Academy. Those of us who had homes in Pakistan (West), went home. At the airport, I led a delegation of nine Bengali boys (all under 15) to ask the Prime Minister (Mr Liaquat Ali Khan): "Where is the RPMC?"

We moved over to a refugee camp: a bare and windswept plain at the foot of the Cantonment Bridge where now the magnificent Fortress Stadium stands. There were several rows of dilapidated tents and we took care to keep the flaps open so as not to choke in the dust trapped inside. The RIMC had taught us not to whimper and we ate with good cheer the two chapatis and the sandy gruel we collected every day from the 'langar' at midday and before sundown. After all, all we had to do was not to stir the gruel so that the bulk of the sand could settle at the bottom of the mess tin! We stayed in the camp some ten weeks or more, and every evening I would stand alone at the foot of the bridge staring at the endless stream of refugees packed like sardines in rickety trucks. Never before nor after have I seen so many faces so giant, dusty, weary, emaciated — some dying, a few already dead, many defiantly alive — truck-loads of men, women and children on the highway to freedom! There was some wailing because of the thirst, the hunger, and a few deaths. I used to stand there every evening and watch them go by, munching for one lucky week an apple that I had bought for two *annas*, cut into four pieces and preserved in a wet handkerchief!

Towards the end of our ten-week stay in the camp, Mr Zafrul Ahsan (the then Deputy Commissioner of Lahore) paid us a visit. By then most of the inmates of the camp were gone and the nine Bengali boys from the RIMC were the most populous single group left behind. I was eloquent enough to persuade the DC to have us admitted in Aitchison College promising that our parents would bear all the expenses involved as soon as contact is established with East Pakistan. Several months later came 'Orient Airways' and that pledge was honoured. Some of my mates later left, but I stayed on to become an Aitchisonian.

Aitchison College has always coped with its name something of the stigma of elitism. It has reeked to many of the indolent affluence of "the chiefs". As a commoner, I myself saw the tail end of that decay. I could tell you a hundred stories of my own encounter with the chiefs all the way from snacks for the little Sahib (brought by an English governess riding a Mercedes) to a trip to Helsinki (sanctioned by the 'Court of Wards') so that my friend might escape the summer heat in Lahore and also watch the Olympic games. Tell you the truth, such monkey business almost always aroused my amusement and more my sense of wonder, never any envy or distress. On the few occasions when I tried to ape them in some petty detail (e.g. wearing crepe-sole shoes as was the "in" thing to do those days), I came to quick grief and never made the same mistake again. The shoes that I had bought with unseemly haste were one size rather short, gave me corns and in-grown toenails. Ever since, I have been happier wearing ordinary shoes and now, with the freedom that age brings, open sandals! I managed to get through my two and a half years at Aitchison with just four pairs of socks. I learnt not only how to mend socks but also to paint my heels black when the socks finally gave way where they usually do!

Aitchison was great, I loved playing fields, and I played a shade more than I studied. I loved the open air and the flowers that grew in abundance everywhere. It was so like the RIMC, but for the summer heat and the absence of the running brooks. I never liked the muddy irrigation waters that once in a while drenched the playgrounds but I understood it was necessary. We were less than ten students in our Senior Cambridge class, only four by the time we got to HSC. Our classroom in the Barry Block was spick and span, with just the setting for a bit of Shakespeare and Shelley with Mr Pinson, a bit of Trevelyan with Mr Gwynn. They are both gone, God bless them! Gone also, I am told, are those days of luxurious spaciousness. We were 150 boys in all at school; the number now has swollen to over 3000. Factories, I have always held, do not make for good schools.

I did well enough at Aitchison and left its portals carrying with me many fond memories. Many years later, General Sawar Khan (the then Governor of the Punjab) was considering me for the post of Principal and wanted to know if I would 'adjust easily' to Lahore and Aitchison! I did not quite get what he meant and my reply must have been equally misty to him: "I think I would get along just as well in Lahore as in Dhaka, Stockholm or Buenos Aires. You see, I have never known any territorial loyalty. But if there is a piece of earth to which I am attached, it is the hockey ground in front of Kelley House. The far corner, in particular, where they would sweep together the fallen leaves and put the pile on fire. Yes, the scent of the smoke of autumn leaves in the far corner of the hockey ground in front of Kelley House! To that I am already adjusted." I never made it to the post of the principal, but that is another story.

After I left Aitchison, I joined the Army. I had barely a year's service and a single pip on my shoulders when early in 1954, I was ordered to join Mr Catchpole at the Punjab Cadet College in Hasan Abdal, as House Master of the Junior School. Only Mr Catchpole could have called off so improbable an assignment for so junior an officer, from the corps of cavalry at that. When General Sher Ali (the then Adjutant General) put in a mild protest, Mr Catchpole was emphatically crisp: "I know what I am doing. Give me that boy and I'll give you the college you want!"

In 1956, eagerly waiting to become a captain but not yet one, I was posted to East Pakistan as Secretary to the Chairman of the Board of Governors for the Cadet College to be established at Faujdarhat. The Chairman of the Board, General Umrao Khan (also GOC East Pakistan), sized me up with a few sharp snubs and then left the entire project to me with blank cheques signed and an ex-post-facto "I agree" to all decisions recorded on the file. Within a span of two years we got everything going: from selection of the site to acquisition of land, drawing up of construction plans and tenders, award of contract (to M/s Omarsons) and supervision of construction, completion of all civil works, design and manufacture of all furniture and furnishings, drawing up of the syllabus, procurement of books and laboratory equipment and sports goods, selection of administrative staff and teachers, selection of the first batch of students and starting with the first class of 40 in late 1958! All this would never have been possible without Mr Catchpole's constant guidance and advice.

This brings me to the end of a cursory expansion and explanation of the dream that I dreamt last night. I had the privilege of attending school in two of the leading institutions of the subcontinent and I had the joy of playing a part in the creation of the first two prototypes in Pakistan and Bangladesh, blending the best of both. Education is an expensive business, but far less expensive and infinitely more productive than ordnance factories and hosiery

KL's Super Mega Malls

MEGA malls and superstores are the rage these days in Malaysia

Never before has there been such a rush to build the next biggest, longest or most exciting shopping malls. Sprawling retail complexes are sprouting all over the country. This is true especially in the suburbs and new townships. But several projects of gigantic proportions in and around Kuala Lumpur are set to transform the city into a mecca of shoppers in Asia in the span of only a few years.

Let's just cite two examples.

The first is Berjaya Star City. It is already anticipating three million patrons once it opens for business in 1998. It is world standard in design and size. Built to be equivalent to the Mall of America in the United States, it consists of six million square feet of integrated development. It is touted as the "numero uno" for retail and entertainment under one roof.

Located in the Golden Triangle district of the city straddling Bukit Bintang St and Imbi St, it will have two million square feet or 16 floors of "pure" shopping space.This means it will easily eclipse the nine floors of Hong Kong's Dragon Centre. Berjaya Star City officials boast "our sixteen floors are a world record."

Each floor will have its own range of retail outlets with all-around visibility. The ambitious designs and plans are expected to make any shopper's heart throb with delight.Two anchor tenants will take up 250,000 square feet supported by 600 atrium frontage shops and 30 mini anchor tenants.There will be shops for simple shoppers as well as exclusive boutiques for the elite.

According to officials, Berjaya Star City will feature new retail concepts like an entire floor for a dozen auto showrooms, a computer and multi-media mart and other theme-retailing technologies.

asian diary BY ARJUNA

Almost one million square feet of the same main poduim will be devoted to "fun" for everyone. There will be Asia's largest indoor water theme park, longest indoor roller coaster and a most exciting urban indoor theme park.

There is likewise a 4,000-seat banquet-cum theater restaurant for formal functions. It is reportedly twice the size of the largest existing banqueting facility in the country. Besides this, there is high-intensity fun such as rock climbing, ice skating (12,000 square feet rink), bowling (48-lane alley) and hi-tech amusement rides. Water lovers will have heart-stopping water rides as well as gentle, meandering waterways to glide at leisure.

Even the pride of Singapore and Japan pales in comparison to the offerings of Berjaya Star City. The commercial development flanking the podium will comprise two tower blocks. One block combines offices and service apartments. The other consists solely of service apartments. The entire Berjaya Star City development will have 5,000 parking bays.

Mid-Valley City Megamall, one other mind-boggling supermart located in the city, is the second project of such huge magnitude. Its retail space alone covers 1.7 million square feet. This is the first phase of the staggering US$920 million Bandar Mid-Valley Development project. It is a joint venture between Kuala Lumpur City Hall and Mid-Valley City Sdn Bhd. It is scheduled for completion in 1998, showcasing another fine example of cooperation between the private sector and government.

The five level mall will be complemented by a four-star hotel, six blocks of 19 to 20-storey office towers and 26 units of 10-storey signature and professional offices. Phase One alone will cover a total area of 3.2 million square feet. Three major anchor tenants have already been secured. There will be 1,000 modular shops, an entertainment centre and a 400,000 square feet indoor family theme park. Annual rental income is expected to be a conservative US$40 million and sale of the units tagged at US$480 million.

A third project is located in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur known as Damansara. It is called the US$340 million Damansara Uptown project. This is an integrated commercial and retail center which is expected to give Damansara a much needed facelift. Phase One of the project will comprise four office blocks (12, 13, 15 and 19 storeys), a hawker centre and a 9-storey 1,500-bay car park.This phase will be completed in late 1996.

By and large other projects are in the pipeline to make, not only Kuala Lumpur, but Malaysia as a whole as a shoppers haven. These other projects are the US$160 million Mega Mall Wawasan in Pera Jaya, Sarawak (in East Malaysia) and the upcoming Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Plaza Rakyat. All factors considered the skyline of the nation is set to change and so are droves of tourists and locals expected to flock for shopping to the numerous shopping and amusements centres mushrooming now.

Depthnews

Intellectual Property Rights . . .

Continued from last week

In today's 'market economy', trading partners both in the developed and developing countries need adequate and enforceable laws of the protection of intellectual property. The countries unable to conform must face isolation. Recently, the People's Republic of China decided to conform. It agreed to enforce laws of intellectual property protection in order to be able to participate in the World Trade. This would not only enable PRC to trade with member countries of GATT, but would help her remain an important partner in world trade.

The degree to which a developing country protects intellectual property rights, would affect the type and scale of investment in that country by multinational companies.

The strength and weakness of a country's system of intellectual property protection seem to have a substantial effect, particularly in high-technology industries. Let me, therefore, illustrate how far the industrialized countries are prepared to go in order to enforce GATT.

According to a survey, US producers of cultural products — motion pictures, records, music, books and computer programmes suffered from huge losses (1992 estimate $4635 million) as a result of foreign piracy. The copyright industries are one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the US economy today.

The copyright industries accounted for approximately 5.8 per cent of the GDP of the US — which is twice the growth rate of the US economy as a whole. These are findings of yet another study: Copyright Industries in the US Economy; 1977-1990 released by the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA).

According to the Business Software Alliance (BSA), an international group representing companies in more than fifty countries, piracy of software remains rampant in both developing and industrial countries. The IIPA report also suggested, quite significantly that the intellectual property piracy was not only a developing country problem. The losses to the US are very high in many developed countries, particularly in Italy and Germany.

The IIPA which regularly tracks intellectual property development world-wide has recommended to the US and other industrialized nations' governments for stepping up enforcement of anti-piracy measures through sanctions.

While minor violations of copyright are perpetuated largely by means of photocopying machines, the recent advent of the electronic scanners attached to powerful computers makes large scale violations very probable because of the ease with which this is achieved and the difficulty of detecting such violations.

How do we combat such violations of copyright? To begin with we must think of separate methods of dealing with minor inadvertent violations mentioned earlier because it is my view that these violators act more from the ignorance of law and lack of awareness than from any commercial motive. The best way of dealing with this group of violators would perhaps be to undertake wide, intensive awareness campaign and by building up respect for intellectual property in their minds. This will not be an easy job and would be quite expensive because a lot of media support (both print and electronic) would be required for such a campaign.

In March, 1994, while participating in an Electronic Dialogue on the subject of Intellectual Property Rights organized by the USIS in Dhaka and talking to the General Counsel of the Copyrights Office at the US Library of Congress, I suggested that large multinational corporations which were losing money because of piracy of their copyrighted products should think of contributing to a campaign fund for creating awareness among the users.

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In conclusion, I wish to say that there is a tendency among users of copyrighted material in developing countries to regard the works of an author from the industrialized nation as free of copyright. Sometimes, such attitude stems from the negative image of "colonial exploiters" we have given to industrialized countries. We must remember that the author or a creative person in an industrialized country could well be struggling for his own survival. Is it not immoral to deprive him of his rights?

Piracy culture had prevailed much longer in the West, particularly in the US before they decided to bring about order in the exploitation of intellectual property. The West has learnt it's lessons and is now waking up to the fact that creativity dries up if it is not adequately remunerated.

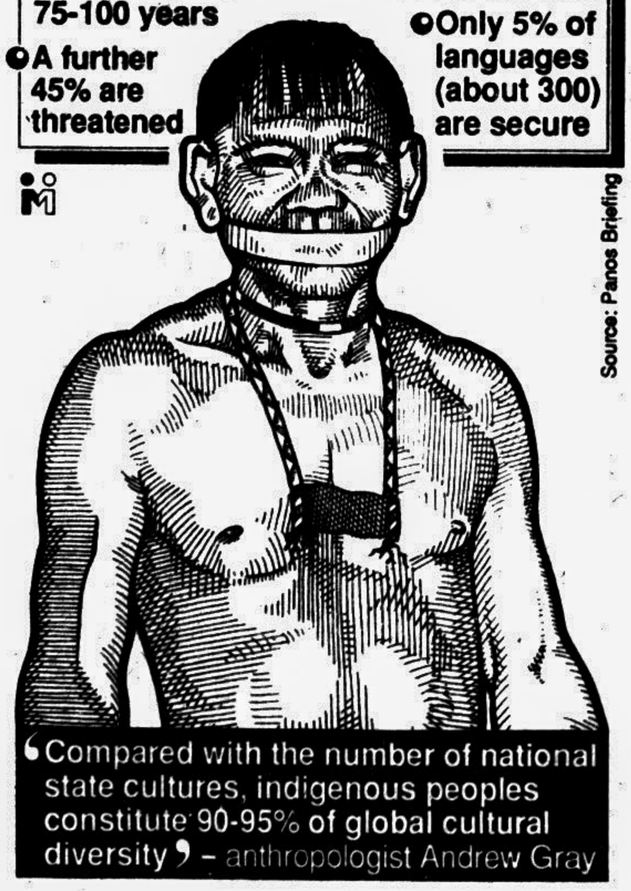
We need not follow the example of the West in paying respects to our own creative persons. Ours is a civilization older than many others. We need to protect the works of our own creative authors. We must act now to give adequate protection to our own intellectual property, our culture, our heritage and our civilization and cut short the life of any "piracy culture that may be prevailing in our society.

Tongue-tied

Kindergartens Push Back the 'Linguistic Philistines'

For more than a century, the Maori language has been dominated and suppressed in its homeland by settlers' English. Now GERARD HUTCHING of Gemini News Service reports, native New Zealanders are nurturing a revival of their culture as part of a drive for self-determination.

- Linguists predict that half the world's 6,000 languages will die out in the next 75-100 years
- A further 45% are threatened
- Only 5% of languages (about 300) are secure



"Compared with the number of national state cultures, indigenous peoples constitute 90-95% of global cultural diversity" – anthropologist Andrew Gray

Source: Panos Briefing

FOUR-year-old Marama Smith sits entranced as her teacher reads the class a legend about the creation of New Zealand. For generations, the story of how the man-god Maui fished the North Island out of the sea has been passed from parent to child.

For countless years, the language used to pass on this tale was Maori, until the arrival of white settlers in the 19th century heralded the suppression of the native tongue by English.

Now the legend is again being read in Maori. Marama and the other 13,000 children a year who are taught in total-immersion kindergarten classes called kohanga reo are proof that the language is making a comeback.

Leaders of the Maori — who comprise 434,000 of New Zealand's 3.5 million people — believe that retaining their language is vital if they are to hold on to their culture.

By the 1970s, the number of fluent speakers had fallen to about 50,000.

"Probably the total number today is even less than that," says Dr Richard Benton of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. "But there has been a substantial change in age composition. In the 1970s, there were few under-10-year-old fluent speakers, but there are quite a number now."

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Maori Language Commissioner Timoti Karetu is more optimistic about the language's survival now than in 1982, when kohanga reo kindergartens were launched.

"I really believe the language will survive, and survive in a Maori form — not just a collection of Maori words spoken with an English grammar," Karetu says.

However, he points out that obstacles remain. Efforts to promote Maori still meet resistance among the English-speaking Pakeha (white) majority, described by Karetu as 'linguistic Philistines."

For example, Auckland newspapers will not carry Maori-only advertisements, claiming it is a foreign tongue. This is despite the fact that Maori won official-language status in 1987.

Some radio station broadcast only in Maori, and there is a daily national television news programme in the language, although the amount of Maori content on TV has not changed for a decade and the news is no longer broadcast at peak viewing times.

Karetu concedes that the language's continuing survival depends to a great degree on Pakeha acceptance of it. Perhaps one encouraging sign is that many Maori words have entered the national English vocabulary, such as mana (prestige), hui (meeting), marae (meeting place), tangata whenua (original people of an area), whakapapa (genealogy), and iwi (tribe).

Karetu believes the language issue is inextricably linked to the rising pressure for Maori self-determination. As the indigenous people take renewed pride in their tongue, demands are likely to grow for more control over their lives and resources, as promised by the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, signed with the early settlers.

The kohanga reo kindergartens have taught more than 100,000 children since 1982. From there, pupils can graduate to kura kaupapa schools — where some classes are taught in Maori and some in English — which cater for children aged up to 17. Almost half Maori children (49 per cent) attend the kohanga reo and 14 per cent go to kura kaupapa.

There is a compelling reason to teach Maori pupils in their own tongue. A recent study of mathematics ability showed that those taught in a Maori-language school performed better than students taught in English.

Because of a shortage of Maori language teachers, some Pakeha who have learnt the language are now teaching children. This has upset a few radical Maori, who believe that white people will dilute their desired message of anti-colonialism.

Karetu dismisses such concerns. "I have no problem if a Pakeha is teaching Maori," he said says. "At the moment we need everybody on board. If we say Maori is the language of New Zealand, then everybody should be able to contribute."

He believes that because of the teacher shortage, the time is ripe for a teachers' training institute where classes would be conducted completely in Maori.

His view is supported by Victoria University linguist Professor Jane Holmes, who says Pakeha will be needed to help carry the torch for the language. "If there were sufficient numbers of native speakers it wouldn't be a problem," she says. "But if the priority is the language then it doesn't matter who teaches it."

Lee Smith, a Maori language lecturer at the university, notes a recent change in attitude among Pakeha: "When we used to talk Maori to one another at parties, Pakeha would get upset. Now they just say, 'Go for it.'"