# Raise a Moral Child

## Abiding by the moral law is a prerequisite to creating a just society

"Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them," wrote Immanuel Kant, "the starry heavens above and the moral law within." These days the moral law within is viewed with increasing confusion and without much admiration.

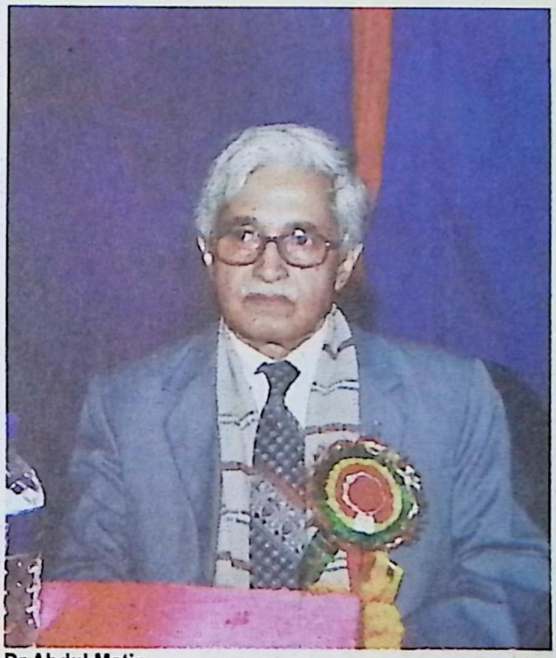
Morality is not just a topic in psychology but close to our conception of the meaning of life. Moral goodness is what gives each of us the sense that we are worthy human beings. We seek it in our friends and mates, try to nurture it in our children, advance it in our politics and justify it with our religions. Disrespect for morality is responsible for our worst atrocities. While what constitutes morality may be open to a philosophical debate, it is safe to say that some of the rules it invokes are universal. One can easily say, "I don't like fish, but I don't care if you eat them," but no one would say, "I don't like kidnapping, but I don't care if you kidnap someone." Nor would anyone argue that putting toxic chemicals in the food we eat is okay.

"To some extent we have managed to meet our basic material needs. We no longer have famines. We have become self-sufficient in food," says Dr Abdul Matin. "But a moral breakdown has taken place in our society. The bad news—murders, kidnapping, burning people alive, adulteration in food—all these are caused by nothing but lack of morality in man," says Dr Matin is Professor emeritus, Department of Philosophy at the University of Dhaka.

There was a time when politicians used to talk about what kind of a society they wanted to build. Now all we hear them talk about is how we can become a middle income country. Not that there is something wrong with that. But what good is money if it does not buy food that is safe and healthcare that can be trusted?

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The question is how to build morality or moral character. "It must be done through education. The duty of the teacher is not only to teach but also build character," says professor Matin. "Morality building must be included in the curriculum at the school level. We have to start by teaching them what it means to be man so they learn that man is better than someone who kills seven people and drown them in the river for money. And those who will teach have to practice it."



Dr Abdul Matin

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Dr Matin has seldom walked into the media stage, and hence into our consciousness at all. His idea may sound clichéd. But if you really think about it, it makes perfect sense. If we are serious about solving our social problems, we must start with finding the root cause. "When a child sees horrific acts of violence on the news, what impression does it leave on his mind? We cannot blame him if he grows up with the idea that man is like that. We have a responsibility to prove to him that man is better than that. We can't give up."

So how long must we try? Until. ■