

# THE MAKER OF MEN

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If I am asked to recall today, at the age of 40, one single teacher whose influence I have accepted most in life, I will unhesitatingly name Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan. When I reflect, on his first anniversary, what was his most outstanding quality, I am tempted to call him the maker of men.

Many things go to the making of a man : economic factor, intellectual guidance, moral influence, etc. I find that my late Professor's contribution expressed itself in all these dimensions.

I know innumerable persons who, but for Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan's help, would have easily slipped into the muck of worldliness away from the realm of literature. In many cases, he was their single source of sustenance.

Although he was on the giving end, he never gave this impression to the recipient of his benevolence. He gave without injuring the dignity or self-respect of the man. His knowledge of human psychology, in this context, was deep and his ways to protect human sensibilities were superb. For instance, he asked a student to assist the college librarian in cataloguing and arranging the books. This was enough to pay his hostel expenditure. Another class-mate of mine was "requested" to spare one hour every evening to guide two school-going children of his wealthy friend. This "one hour" sacrifice of time covered all his monthly expenses. In another case, he "borrowed" the complete set of text books (for M.A. English) from a prosperous graduating student and "lent" it to a deserving student. (Lending is definitely different from charity).

Most of these beneficiaries were personally known to me. I also remember their reaction. They never felt that they were living on the charity of their teacher (later Principal and Vice-Chancellor) or that of his opulent friends. They rather considered it as their earning. They were, nonetheless, deeply obliged to him for "arranging" these sources of livelihood.

It may be added that Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan's patronage was not confined to the academically outstanding students. Probably, any Principal would have set a stake on the winning horse. But Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan was different. The boy might be average in studies but if the Professor was sure that, with some financial support, he would climb up he would give him a helping hand.

Again, Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan was not a patron of financially poor students alone. The rich equally benefited from his benignness. Only the cup was different. It was filled according to the need. Most of the rich students were relatively poor in the field of academics. He worked very hard on them to scratch off their crust of undue wealth with all its attendant ills, and injected, very carefully and discreetly, the value of learning in them. Many such sons of rich families finally turned out different citizens after two years' chiselling by Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan. While writing these lines, many such "converts" come to my mind. Their names hardly matter.

The poor and the rich alike drank from his cup of morality. It was probably necessary to give a proper shine to the product. His opening address to a new class always centred on morality and the same strain was kept up in his subsequent lectures. This at times earned him the title of a "preacher rather than a teacher". But it did not offend him. Perhaps, there was no fundamental difference between the aims of the two. Both worked for producing good citizens.

When having benefited from financial, intellectual and moral upbringing by the late Professor, one left the parlours of the college or university and fell upon the thorns of life, he found the world very different from the one Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan had prepared him for. It was a world of treachery and crookedness—shorn of all morality, the late Professor used to emphasize. Many of us, for instance, missed our chances for the Central Superior Services or other lucrative vocations because we, according to our Professor's sermons, believed that the sources of happiness lay within ourselves rather than in high office or social status. While we contented ourselves with reading Keats and Shakespeare, our contemporaries shot very high in life. Alas, we were not on a social island but lived on the same planet and, in certain cases, in the same cities and the same streets. The contrast was very sharp and the social compulsions very agonising. But we, the disciples of Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan, survived these jerks of society and did not have to regret very long.

I cannot say about others but I can vouch for myself that with time my faith in my Professor's teachings has deepened rather than shaken. Now I appreciate that he didn't prepare his students for temporary worldly gains but equipped them for their ultimate triumph over evil. I honestly believe that as long as good is regarded superior to evil, virtue to vice and the sublime to the mundane, the teachings of Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan will hold good.

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