

The illiterate must be made literate. For the development of skills and talents, one must be given appropriate opportunities with infrastructure provisions. A small girl in a small village must, firstly, get electricity to complete her book. This is the message of prosperity coming on the wings of alphabets

"Education is both a tool of justice as well as fundamental as driver of economic development"

-Kevin Rudd

Ethics and Economics

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Remembering Ramayana to recall the importance of ethics may seem too dramatic but the fact remains that this epic is perhaps one of the most important and strongest stories which teach us the importance of ethics and using our knowledge in the right way. Ravan was a great scholar, strong and powerful. He knew all the four Vedas (the highest educational achievement of his time), had defeated the Gods himself and had immense power. But he put his knowledge and power to achieve a wrong end. What followed for him and his kingdom was war and destruction. Now, whether Ravan was unethical or not is another discussion and the importance of destruction is a complex philosophical topic in itself. But the important moral that should be learnt from this text is that knowledge and power without the

right frame of mind can lead to disastrous consequences.

I remember the moral of this story trying to contradict the argument of someone associated with the Delhi university who believed that scraping the Economy, State and Society course from Delhi University (or at least making it optional) was a way forward and would make our course more 'compatible' with universities around the world. His argument was that studying Economy, State and Society which he called nothing but 'Ethical Economics' is useless or at least of secondary importance. Students could do without it. Now naming the academician is not needed or important. But it is important to realize that he is not an exception who believes in such ideals; rather I have observed and noticed that there is a rising trend in economics to focus only towards what is called 'Positive Economics' in curriculum, educational institution and policy making.

First of all, calling Economy, State and Society as Ethical Economics is itself questionable, as the horizon of the subject goes way beyond Ethics. It gives a broader view of the world and the economic system we live in. Many of the students who read the subject with interest (most of them who are lucky enough to have a good teacher) will tell you that it is an extremely interesting and important subject which teaches us things that orthodox mainstream economics fails to do. It explains to us how the world around us is operating and the 'system' in which we live in. Much of this is done without making assumptions (maybe that's why orthodox assumption loving economists don't like it). Secondly, but importantly it makes us realize that we should learn to analyze things not just on the basis of

efficiency. It makes us realize that 'power' exists, the society is highly antagonistic and actually the world is still divided into classes; among other sub divisions. Thus, ethics do come into play. Welfare has to be judged beyond Pareto efficiency and crises do occur most of the time because of the properties of the system itself, with its effects mainly on the working class. The whole debate on the food security bill highlights the need to take a broader view of economics. People getting food has to be considered more important than fiscal responsibility. Thirdly it introduces us to different political thoughts which an economics student should know. Knowing the background of how economics has evolved over the years is also important for a better understanding of the subject. Moreover, subjects like ESS make us think. Thinking and opening up your mind has to be the basic aim of education and learning. Albert Einstein one famously said "knowledge has to be continuously renewed or else it would be lost". Thinking, free minded individuals and academicians are essential for this purpose.

The focus on Positive Economics originates from the argument that economists just need to tell how an economic policy will affect quantitative variables like output, Inflation etc. It's not the business of an economist to give his own judgment of whether this change would have a good effect on society or nation as a whole. Doing this at the undergraduate level is a dangerous thing because a large proportion of students don't actually become economists per se but go towards many different streams. But if they actually only judge policies of the government on the basis of efficiency and growth, we are heading for trouble like the beautiful 'Golden Lanka '. When they have to

vote and evaluate government policies a broader notion of the world is important. All this is a part of a more disturbing trend of today's world where ethics and morals are getting lost somewhere between the ideals of freedom and liberalism. People have started judging things only on the basis of 'legality' and 'illegality' and considering morals as useless. Believe me, I know morals and ethics are highly subjective, but it needs to be realized that morals and a certain level of discipline is very important for any nation or an economy to function; for example maintaining a queue is nothing but a moral, otherwise in a market the one more physically powerful (or with the gun) and thus more efficient should get his work done first. History shows us that idealistic societies usually do better in the long run as all the individuals follow a common goal. If that ideal is good and inclusive then that development is also sustainable. Moral and ethics can't be left only for the families and other institutions to teach. The education system itself has to take the responsibility of creating ethical individuals. It can get very confusing for young minds to think as 'rational', emotionless individuals and at the same time believe in something greater than the petty issues of everyday life and working for the society and the underprivileged. It is individuals who build nations, so a strong, powerful, progressive and just nation can only be found if the future generations are not only strong but civilized, progressive and efficient but also accommodating and just to fellow nationals and other human beings in general .

As far as the argument of making our course more compatible with the world universities, we have to realize that ideas of Marx and

Socialism are intentionally curbed in Western countries. Moreover, what is correct and important for a developing country and its individuals to learn can be very different from a developed country. Trying to copy the syllabus of universities of USA and UK may not be the right way to go forward. This point reminds me of another paper he wanted to scrap-Economic History of India. Now to be fair to him, he wanted it to club some of its 'important' chapters with the paper Indian Economic Development since 1947. It is ironic that in that paper we hardly study India's economic development since 1947 so clubbing it with a paper already facing an identity crisis will ruin it again. This argument is also a part of a general trend which I would like to call 'Scientification of Economics'. Too many people from science background who dislike history and think of it as useless support this notion. They fail to understand the fact that theoretical economics is not only needed to understand economic history' but the study of history is itself very important to verify whether theoretical economics and its results do actually hold in the real world or not. Maybe the fact that the study of Economic history and ESS makes us question the basics of orthodox neo-classical economics is the reason why many mainstream economics dislike them. Two nations who never lost their own sense of history and identity even while adopting ideologies and policies from the more developed countries are: Japan and Germany. Where would have these countries been without their own sense of history, culture and industrial innovation makes us realize the importance of these concepts.

In the end, I would like to say that I am in no way a Marxist or an anti-mainstream

economist. I am too young and too unaware to become an ardent follower of some ideology. Moreover I have nothing against that teacher who believes in no ESS and EHI. He is an excellent teacher and has tremendous knowledge of the subjects he himself teaches. He is an economist in his own right. Yet his views show the narrow mindedness that even fails to open the minds of highly educated individuals. I believe at an undergraduate level rather than reading just what the current majority of economists believe; the curriculum should open our horizon, so that we become thinking individuals who can judge theories on their results and elements themselves. We have to remember that economics is still a very young subject whose laws are far from established. It concerns human beings and their behavior affects the economy itself. It's not yet Physics or chemistry and it should not be taught like that. As Mr. Amartya Sen recently pointed out in his article in 'The Economics Times' taking a broader notion of economics is the need of the hour.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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| 1. Blisspoint | 11. NABARD |
| 2. Capitalism | 12. Equity |
| 3. Superstructure | 13. Hegel |
| 4. Laissez Faire | 14. Debentures |
| 5. Oligopoly | |
| 6. Ceteris Paribus | |
| 7. Gilt funds | |
| 8. EXIM | |
| 9. Kurtosis | |
| 10. Polonius Point | |