

The Refund: A Critique of Education System

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ABSTRACT

We all agree that education and education system directly or indirectly influences society. It aims to train the citizens for making the nation self independent. It imparts the human values like- honesty, liberty, equality, fraternity and truth...etc. Surely education is the tool that truly changes the civilization and humanity. Education and literature are inseparable. Literature is the reflection of the society. The present research paper reflects one of the sub-themes of this international seminar- **‘Corruption in literature as portrayed in literature.** ‘It is an attempt to present how literature reflects education to bring out changes in it. It hints that the present system of education is outdated. Now, it does not suit to the benefit of the contemporary society. It must be changed.

‘The Refund’ by Fritz karinthy is a short play which presents the unusefulness of today’s education. The very idea that a former student of the school demands his fees as Refund is very strange. But, it presents the actual failure of the education system. This

play in a very simple manner presents the need of time and necessity of changing today’s education system. This play can be critically interpreted at two levels. The first is the real meaning of education and today’s education system. It critically attacks the so called meaningless, outdated education system and suggests the needy, positive, fruitful changes. The second level is the inculcation of human values. To have a holistic approach towards education, emphasis must be laid on incorporating human values that will lead to complete self-reliance. At last, the teacher declared that Wasserkopf, the former student had given all correct answers to their questions and thus, he passed the exam. In this way, they succeeded in not giving the refund to Wasserkopf. Finally, he was shown the door without a refund. The masters had finally succeeded in outsmarting a crafty and sly pupil and saving their boss, the principal, school and the education system.

Key Words: Education, literature, corruption, refund, outdated, influence, society...etc.

We all agree that Education and education system directly or indirectly influences society. It brings about the positive development in the society. It aims - to train the citizens for making the nation self independent. It imparts the human values like- honesty, liberty, equality, fraternity and truth...etc. Surely education is the tool that truly changes the civilization and humanity. In this globalized world, the quality of education marks the international status of the nation. Education and literature are inseparable. They constitute to form a civilized society. Literature is the reflection of the society. Social, cultural, economic, political, educational aspects of that particular society are reflected through the literature. It criticizes and tries to make people aware about their rights and duties. The present research paper reflects one of the sub-themes of this international seminar- 'Corruption in literature as portrayed in literature. 'It is an attempt to present how literature reflects education to bring out changes in it. It hints that the present system of education is outdated. Now, it does not suits to the benefit of the contemporary society. It must be changed. 'The Refund' is a short play which presents the unusefulness of today's education. The very idea that a former student of the school demands his fees as Refund is very strange. But, it presents the actual failure of the education system.

Fritz Karinthy -25th June 1887 to 29th August 1938, was a Hungarian author, playwright, poet, journalist, and translator. Karinthy was born in a bourgeois family in Budapest. His family was originally Jewish, but they had changed religion shortly before he was born. He started his writing career as a journalist and remained a writer of short, humorous plays. Karinthy was an admirer of H. G. Wells. From the First World War, his writing became more serious and engaged, though never leaving a satirical bent. Karinthy cited Swift as a major influence. Karinthy had a brain tumor for which he was operated upon in 1936. He describes this experience in his autobiographical novel, *Journey Round my Skull*, originally published in 1939. He died two years after the operation, during a holiday. He is well known for his dry sense of humor. Refund brings out the extraordinary sense of parody, word play in karinthy's literary art.

The play refund is full of humour which deals with an extraordinarily ludicrous situation. The main character in this play is a good- for- nothing fellow called Wasserkopf. He was forty years old. He was a former student of the school. He revisited his school and demanded the fees he had paid as Refund. He claimed that he had learnt nothing at school. He tells that his school certificate was useless as he had not been able to secure a job out of it.

He could not get any employment and wherever he went the people told him that he was fit for nothing and nothing worth while he had learnt when he was studying. One day he met Lederer, his friend and asked him about his business. When Lederer told him about foreign exchange and Hungarian money, he was not able to understand anything and started asking questions about foreign exchange to Lederer. He guided Wasserkopf that when he didn't know the silly thing what he had studied, better he must go to his school and get his tuition fees back. Wasserkopf who was jobless and didn't have any finance, this idea sounded something beneficial to him and so he went to the school where he studied once. So, he was demanding the refund.

Wasserkopf determined to get easy money in the form of the refund by doing nothing. The Principal had never faced such a confusing situation before. He summoned an emergency meeting of the staff. The teachers didn't take long to realize that they were dealing with a crafty and cunning individual. All of them were confused. Wasserkopf's idea was to take a re-examination, fail in the exam and go home with refund. The teachers realized that Wasserkopf's real intention was to fail in the exam and claim the refund. Therefore, they had to devise a counter-play by which they could outsmart Wasserkopf. The teachers decided to outsmart the old student by proving all his answers right, however erroneous they might be. The Mathematics teacher said that in the implementation of the plan they had to stick together. They had to be united and help each other in implementing their plan. The exam was an oral exam.

The Maths teacher said that all the teachers must ensure that Wasserkopf must pass in the examination. Even if Wasserkopf gave wrong answer, he should not be failed. Otherwise, other students too might ask for a refund. All agreed to this suggestion. Thus, while Wasserkopf was determined to fail to get refund, the teachers were equally determined to pass him for not giving the refund. The interaction between them is very humorous. The Principal and the teachers determined to save the education system and the school from this critical situation.

They decided that they should accept whatever answers Wasserkopf may give and ensure that all of them as accurate and he must be passed in the reexam. The teacher asked very easy questions. Though Wasserkopf gave ridiculous answers they justified every answer. The mathematics teacher then asked a meaningless question and Wasserkopf gave an equally meaningless answer. The mathematics teacher said that Wasserkopf has failed. Wasserkopf was told to calculate the amount of that should be refunded. Delighted, Wasserkopf made

calculations and reached the figures of 6,450 crowns. The mathematics teacher then said that his calculation was actually a question in the test. At last, Wasserkopf was declared as a mathematical genius. The teacher declared that Wasserkopf had given all correct answers to their questions and thus, he passed the exam. In this way they succeeded in not giving the refund to Wasserkopf. Finally, he was shown the door without a refund. The masters had finally succeeded in outsmarting a crafty and sly pupil and saving their boss, the principal, school and the education system. It also shows the ability of the teachers to manage the situation and how they tackle Wasserkopf without spoiling the reputation of their school.

This play can be critically interpreted at two levels. The first is the real meaning of education and today's education system. It critically attacks the so called meaningless, outdated education system and suggests the needy, positive, fruitful changes. Following critical remark best clarifies the meaning of total education.

"Education is a process that moulds the personality of a person. The general meaning 'total education' is- 'the system of teaching, learning and initiation of knowledge which leads to complete self- reliance, excellent development of personality and continuous evolution of virtuous tendencies." (Sharma, Acharya,).

This play in a very simple manner presents the need of time and necessity of changing today's education system.

The second level is the inculcation of human values. We read in the Bhagwat Gita again and again that we must all work incessantly.

All work is by nature composed of good and evil.... Good action will entail upon us good effect, bad action, bad effect". (Karma Yoga, p-38).

There is a chain of such values which are more or less connected. It must be followed and inculcated through education. This play highlights the same idea. To have a holistic approach towards education, emphasis must be laid on incorporating human values that will lead to complete self-reliance. In the same context a person learns from mistakes. Therefore, mistakes can act as a learning experience too. In this play, the protagonist Wasserkopf is an object of wrong doings and he committed all sorts of mistakes. His mistakes act like a learning ground for the viewers and the society. The following mistake clearly presents the significance of the values in human life. **Wasserkopf said the teachers, "Who the hell are you? Sit down, you loafers!"**

The address to his masters showed that how important the values of respect and accuracy are. As the play proceeds further, this behavior is mere mockery on the pupils who are always ready to blame teachers, others and the system. In this play, this mistake is linked up with the chain of events which finally leads to a moral teaching. It is clear that Human values are ideals that define or give meaning to our lives. Education is incomplete if we ignore the part played by such values.

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