

IS HONESTY THE BEST POLICY?

Pages with reference to book, From 252 To 252

“Honesty is the best policy” is an axiom of long standing. This is what I was taught from childhood at home and in school. But I was shocked when I discovered that this does not hold true for Karachi students. For years, I had heard from others how students cheat in their exams. But you have to see it to believe how low the standards of honesty have sunk. I appeared for my matric examination this year and I was a witness to what went on in the examination centres. The candidates talked freely with one another and with the invigilators as if they were in theft class-rooms in a free period. They would unhesitatingly ask the invigilator the answers to the various objective questions. Worse still, the teachers would go ahead and tell them the answers. In the essay-type questions the invigilators allowed the students to copy from one another. In my class-room there was one senior teacher who was very honest and very strict. She would not let any one cheat. In fact the other teachers were afraid of her and would not help the students when she was around. But no sooner had she left my class to go to the next room when the other invigilators who were not so honest told the students to ask whatever they wanted to before their superior returned. Since it had been instilled in me that I should not cheat, I had studied hard and was as prepared for my papers as I could be. I was very nervous of course. When the teachers began helping the students I was determined not to ask for help and I did not. But I was thrown in a quandary in my Pakistan studies paper. I had completed my paper but was stuck on one objective question. I was confused about the answer. Since time was running out I wrote what I remembered. At that stage one of the invigilators who was strolling around came and stood besides me. She said to me that my answer was wrong. In fact she even told me the correct answer. I did not know what to do. I was torn between correcting my answer and leaving it as it was. It was a one mark question and I saw every one writing down the answer. I wavered for long before I put my pen down, leaving the wrong answer staring me in my face. Now! ask, what should a student do in this situation? Even if you are determined to be honest, your surroundings make it so difficult for you. And then, how does one feel when the results come. All those who cheated get better marks than you did because you chose to be honest. One even starts wondering whether honesty is really the best policy.

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