

CADET COLLEGE PETARO – A COLLEGE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Prof. Affan Maqsood, Ex-Professor & ex-Head of Dept. of English, CCP (1969-1996)
(Currently Prof. Affan Maqsood is Head of Dept. of English at the Women's Institute of Science and Humanities, Islamabad)

The mere thought of Cadet College Petaro makes me nostalgic about the twenty seven years I spent at Petaro as a teacher of English. I joined as lecturer in English, and left as professor and Head of the Department of English, and Divisional Co-ordinator officer. Petaro is reminiscent of the golden period of my life. It was not merely a period of my teaching, but also a period of my grooming as a teacher of English.

No doubt there are some other good cadet colleges in the country, Cadet College Hasan Abdal being perhaps the oldest with its own history and traditions. But of all the colleges, Cadet College Petaro stands at the climax. My opinion is neither based on my emotional attachment with this institution nor on prejudice against any other institution. Rather it is genuinely based on cogent reasons. I joined Cadet College Petaro on the 4th of September, 1969. If I am not mistaken, the same year or the next, Petaro won the President's Sport Shield, by winning the Inter-Cadet College Sports Tournament for the fourth consecutive year.

I do admit that Hasan Abdal has an excellent record in terms of extra-curricular activities, in general and academics in particular. The whole credit for this achievement does not go only to Hasan Abdal but also to the cadets, who are selected purely on merit. Secondly the total number of cadets at Hasan Abdal is fewer than that of Cadet College Petaro. Thus they naturally receive full attention of the teachers regarding education, character building and extra-curricular activities.

Cadet College Petaro, on the contrary, has to execute a gigantic task. Cadets are no doubt selected through a competitive test, but we should not forget that most of them are selected from the rural areas of Sindh. So even if the selection is made on merit, their standard may differ, keeping in view the lack of facilities and competent teachers in the rural areas as compared to those available in the urban areas. However, Petaro cannot ignore the right of the students from rural areas to apply for admission to Cadet College Petaro.

Now only a competent educationist can realize the difficulties faced by the teaching and naval staff of Petaro. It is a gigantic task for the staff to put their heart and soul to bring these boys up to their required standard. Despite these handicaps, the product of Cadet College Petaro has been highly satisfactory. In the fields of academics, literary activities and sports Petaro's performance has been highly appreciable; and there is no denying the fact that it is still regarded as one of the best institutions in Pakistan.

Cadet College Petaro plays an important role in producing multi-dimensional personality of cadets. Apart from absolute concentration on the academic side, emphasis is laid on military training, literary activities and sports. At the same time, Cadets can join Shooting Sailing and Riding clubs, and take up any hobby of their own choice.

In order to develop leadership qualities, various appointments are given to cadets, who perform their duties under the supervision of at least a lieutenant from the Pakistan Navy. Apart from joining the armed forces, cadets are free to join any career of their own choice. By God's grace thousands of Petarians have been proving their worth in various fields of life.

The outstanding feature of Cadet College Petaro is the promotion of cultural integration among the students of various regions of Pakistan. Although direct recruitment from other provinces has been minimised, yet students speaking various languages, domiciled in Sindh, are still being selected by Petaro. They live together twenty four hours with peace, harmony and love; and feel proud of being Petarians.

Here it reminds me the words of the first principal of Cadet College Petaro, Col. Coombes (retd). While addressing the cadets, he said, "Great Britain was 'great' when all the units of the United Kingdom were well-knit and closely united, but the day they started thinking in terms of autonomy, Britain lost her glory of the past". So he called upon the cadets, "Never think in terms of Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis and Pathans but only in terms of Pakistanis. Thus Pakistan will progress by leaps and bounds"

It is a matter of great rejoicing that Ex-Petarians have maintained this tradition. Cadet College Petaro is a model to be followed by other institutions in the country.

I pray to God Almighty to strengthen Cadet College Petaro as an exemplary institution to illuminate the way for the other institutions.

May Petaro live long!