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## Review moral studies

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IN schools, colleges and private institutions of higher learning, Moral Studies is compulsory for non-Muslim students. The introduction of Moral Studies is a good move.

In today's world, ethics and values are at a discount as people are becoming more developed. Teachers are losing dedication, parents are fighting for more time to make ends meet, children are happy at the cyber-cafes and elders are being neglected for some reason.

These developments will ruin our society if left unchecked.

Today, Moral Studies has become a subject to memorise for the examination hall.

"What is my mark for morals?" asks a student. "Did I pass or fail my morals?" asks another one. It is important for everyone to realise that morals is not about marks alone.

It is about becoming moral, living every moment of our lives according to the teachings of our great religions, be it Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, or any religion.

In fact, parents are considered to be the first teachers of morals. The Malay proverb says, Kalau diruntuh buluh, biarlah dari rebungunya (if you want to bend a bamboo, do it when the shoots are young).

Lately, I've noticed a significant number of young college students smoking and misbehaving during their break. Worse, teens and young girls dress indecently and freely mix around with their fellow students of different sex. I wonder if the college authorities feel something has to be done to correct their students or they don't seem to be bothered as long as they qualify for their degrees.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has many times reminded us that education should be acquired with a sense of realisation and modesty. Students should be taught to develop good character irrespective of what discipline they belong to. The end of education should be character, not merely 5As or 10As.

So it is time the Education Ministry evaluated the impact of Moral Studies, whether it makes any difference in the students' outlook and perception. If it does not, a programme such as TRAC (Tradition, Religion, Aspiration and Culture Studies) could be introduced.

TRAC will not only give students a better understanding of their respective religions, culture and traditions but also that of their other Malaysian brothers and sisters. This would help to strengthen national unity and integration.

We have seen the never-ending war between the Israelis and Palestinians, ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims by Christian Serbs and many other religious and ethnic conflicts around the world.

The multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious set-up in Malaysia should bring awareness to each and every Malaysian that we cannot take peace and freedom for granted.

We cannot leave it to the Government alone to bear this responsibility.

As the saying goes "Prevention is better than cure" we should really put in our mind and soul to see that the social harmony, economic prosperity and political stability of this nation is safeguarded forever.

Although we Malaysians are divided in religion, language, culture and many other ways, we must accept the brotherhood of man and spread these "thought vibrations" in our homes, neighbourhoods, working environment,

offices schools etc.

If we can prove that the Malaysian Formula (the recipe for our success as a nation in working together) which has worked for the last 43 years could be strengthen and nourished, than we can stand tall and proud and become a role-model to the rest of the world in this millennium.

For this to happen we should not dampen any move towards greater awareness and deeper understanding among the people of Malaysia, especially the younger generations, teenagers and youths of today.

I hope the Education Ministry will take into consideration the facts, as TRAC studies would awaken the spirit of the student and bring greater realisation than by merely teaching Moral Studies, which is more sort of a secular knowledge like any other discipline.

In short, through these changes I believe they will realise "education is not merely for a living, but should teach our students how to live".