

To Be or Not Be

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Glassdoor, Business Insider, Forbes and the likes make a list of top jobs in the USA every January and it is also then that a lot of sitting in India feel pride and remorse at the same time. Dentistry is the among the most well paid and most respected professions in the first world. In fact, until 2017 it was always ranked number one. Only in 2018, it slipped to number 2. It's not only pay that is the criteria which ranges from job security, unemployment rates, flexibility etc. as well.

USA produces nearly as many dentists as it needs and getting into a dental school is prestigious. It comes with pride and a lot of onus. India on the other hand has over 1 lakh surplus dentists. The 310 dental schools in India churn out 30,000 dentists every year. Unlike USA, we do not have big clinics and chains to absorb the crowd, neither does our education prepare the students for a competitive world outside. There are places where a fresh graduate is paid Rs. 2500 for a month (34 USD) in contrast to America's 100k USD.

American population affords a dentist, India still faces poverty and hunger and epidemics. Where people die of easily curable diseases like Tuberculosis, dental treatment is only needed for pulling the teeth out and dentures. It's not a surprise that roadside quacks are more trustworthy according to people than degree holders.

Nevertheless, the degree holders are incompetent too. Students are passed in the dental schools because so and so said and mr xyz has an influence over some prof in the dental school. In the long run, one tiny deed of passing someone who doesn't deserve creates a pool of sub-standard but over-qualified dentists.

While earlier, this was the case in undergraduate courses, it has slowly percolated into residency and post graduate programs as well. Students study, present seminars and journal clubs but when it comes to clinical practice, they are all clueless. Dental schools are producing specialists and super-specialists on paper and taking

back huge sums of money but are our specialists really special? Do we give them the right knowledge to withstand and survive competition? Are they all competent?

Engineers get jobs, tailors and Uber drivers also earn a decent amount. Dentists and Doctors? They suffer and suffer.

I was listening to a spiritual leader recently who claimed how we need to make ourselves one nation and how need to promote and produce that emotion of oneness and belonging. I say, there is only one way of being a nation which is true in its essence. by doing justice to one's job. If everyone does his/her job right, we won't be in this vicious cycle of education scam.

The question then again lies, to be or not to be?

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