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Campus : Past And Present

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A memory is based on the law of association, the present polluted Campus violence reminds us of the golden days of the Dhaka University when we happened to be its students. It is said that the greatest irony of history is that men read history but do not take lesson from history. If our politicians and leaders of society could cut their eyes on the past golden days of the Dhaka University, they could find out the solution of all Campuses' violence.

In our days of early third decade of the present century, pure and serene atmosphere prevailed in the Dhaka University Campus including the then three residential Halls of the students, the Salimullah Muslim Hall, the Jagannath Hall and the Dhaka Hall. The Salimullah Muslim Hall was meant exclusively for the Muslim students. It was then the Centre of attraction for the external world as a unique residential Hall with all possible facilities for the Muslim students of Bengal. I had a chance to see here the presence of Mia Sir Fazle Hussain, Education Member of the India Government and of the acting governor of the then Bengal, Sir Wood Head and of Dr. Khaled Sheldrake, President of Western Islamic Mission with Headquarters in London. Mia Fazle Hussain and Dr. Khaled Sheldrake were given life membership of the Salimullah Muslim Hall Students' Union.

There were three separate Students' Union of the three separate Halls and one was the University Students' Union. No clash of students on any account was found to have disturbed the serene atmosphere and cultural and Co-curricular activities of these Unions. Because of the continued sanctity of the Campus, a healthy social and cultural life developed among the students and sweet and close relations existed between the teachers and students, between students and students and between teachers and teachers. This was just possible because in those days both the teachers and the students were far above any political party affiliation. They were more concerned with education and cultural activity than with politics. There were inter-hall co-operation and entente cordiale in all functions and teachers' participation in Hall Union Functions, which were just possible because of the peaceful atmosphere of the Campus inconceivable in these days of Campus violence. I could notice such happy days from my personal experience while I was a student, a research scholar, and a teacher of the University and a House Tutor of the S. Muslim Hall during the period from 1932-1937, just a part of the golden era of the then Dhaka University. A brief

analysis of my life in Dhaka University and S.M. Hall will bear out the truth of my statement what was true in my case was equally true in similar other cases of students irrespective of caste and creed. Though now Hall Unions are functioning yet these are bereft of the images of those days because of Campus violence and party politics and its sinister influence on the student community.

As a student I had the good luck to have close association of the most remarkable Vice-Chancellor Sir A.F. Rahman formerly Reader of History, Dhaka University and the First Provost of the Salimullah Muslim Hall. Further the renowned historians of the Sub-Continent Dr. R.C. Majumder was my teacher, a department head and a Vice-Chancellor. Dr K.K. Kanungu was also my teacher, a department head and Dr. Mahmud Hussain (Ex-Vice-Chancellor of D.U.) my teacher and a colleague. Through my participation in the cultural and Co-curricular activities of the Muslim Hall and of the University Students' Union then held under the congenial atmosphere of the Campus, I had also close and sweet association with Dr. Haridas Bhattacharya, Head of the dept. of Philosophy, Dr. H.L. De, Head of the dept. of Economics, both recognised scholars of the Sub-Continent.

I had also personal cultural contact with Dr. Fida Ali Khan, the then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, an erudite scholar of Arabic, Persian and Urdu hailing from the Baroda State of India and also with some other scholars of the University. Because of my close contact with them, I could command their affection and they would call me by name, if and when, I had a chance to meet them.

As an inquisitive and ambitious students, I had close contact with the Vice-Chancellor and the above mentioned teachers of the University and particularly had more free and frequent contact with my teachers of my department in their off-time in the University as well as at their residential quarters. Far from being annoyed they would rather encourage and appreciate my inquisitiveness and would offer me all possible suggestions and guidance for my brilliant success in the final Examination. They were all including Sir. A.F. Rahman with whom I used to reciprocate my ideas on general historical topics, highly satisfied with my 1st class 1st position in the final M.A. Examination in 1935 in History and offered me their heartfelt congratulation, and blessings on this account. Dr. K.R. Kanungu had three papers in M.A. and because of this I had frequent contact with him -

on my work on original sources and he was so much elated with joy at my result that he spoke about me in his certificate "Mr. M. Nurul Karim is one of the best products of the University and his teachers are justly proud of him etc." He was so much affectionate to me that when in 1934 I fell ill by an attack of typhoid, he came to the S. Muslim Hall twice and stayed at my bed side for sometime giving me consolation in soothing terms. Such was the relation between a teacher and the taught in those days, irrespective of caste and creed.

Image of a Vice-Chancellor of the time

The then Vice-Chancellor Sir A.F. Rahman with whom I had free contact was a unique personality known for his dignified bearing in talking and walking. None not even an office cleark or peon would suffer from inferiority complex by coming in contact with him. His punctuation of words and expressions, his brief but grave utterances would create emotions in the minds of the audience. His signature was as beautiful as his personal appearance. It was covetously taken by teachers and students for preservation in their personal albums. He was known for the breadth of his vision and the magnanimity of his soul. He was always accessible to all including teachers and students at all times as far as possible such was the image of the Vice-Chancellor of those days shining at the Summit of the Peaceful horizon of the University Campus.

Student-Student relation of the time

Bereft of any Political affinity and political influence from any quarter the Student-Student relation was so close and intimate that it can never be imagined in those days of gangrenous politics. The student-student relations was most cordial in those days irrespective of caste and creed. I had a close Hindu friend of the Jagannath Hall, a Sanskrit Scholar who was always my invited guest-friend in our Muslim Hall feasts. In 1934 when I was afflicted with typhoid fever during my stay as a resident student of the S. Muslim Hall, the Hall students prepared a list of 126 boarders who looked after me in turn for about a month. This also reflects the serenity of the Campus which helped the growth of such social virtues.

Sessional activities of the Hall Unions

As the residential Halls within the Campus of the Dhaka University were meant for the healthy develop-

ment of the sociocultural development of the life of the students through their cultural and Co-curricular activities side by side with their intellectual development through their University education, such activities were found to have been encouraged and held on routine work basis throughout the whole year without any Campus violence from any quarter for any reason, political or otherwise, debate meetings, paper readings, periodical lecture by University Professors and distinguished Scholars and visitors from outside, annual installation ceremony of Hall elections, holding of annual drama, holding of annual dinners with the participation of teachers of the University and eminent persons from outside, holding of annual dinners with the participation of teachers of the University eminent persons from outside, holding of annual milad and allied religious functions, publication of annual magazines with contribution of articles by students and Professors of the University, happened to be the common feature of the days, inconceivable in these days of political turmoil and political hypertension of the student community.

Maintenance of discipline in University Halls and Colleges of higher education was not considered to be a problem in those days. No student was allowed to stay without admission within specified time. There was no illegal stay of outsiders which would require police action for their expulsion. I happened to be the House Tutor of the S. Muslim Hall in 1936-37 and Superintendent of the then Iqbal Hall, now known as Zahirul Huq Hall for the period from 1950-53 on Govt. appointment. The then Iqbal Hall was then mainly meant for the accommodation of Law students of the Dhaka University. There were then 17 sheds in its present site with only one isolated building at Jaynag Road. I used to maintain the congenial atmosphere of the Hall by holding seminars, cultural functions and co-curricular activities among the boarders. Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury was then a Law student of the Hall who used to take the leading part in debates and Hall Seminars.

I was then Professor and Head of the Dept. of History, Dhaka College and part time teacher of the Dhaka University with assignment of Post-graduate teaching.

These are some sweet memories of days past. To quote Poet W. Cowper, "What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,

How sweet their memories still."

(To be continued)