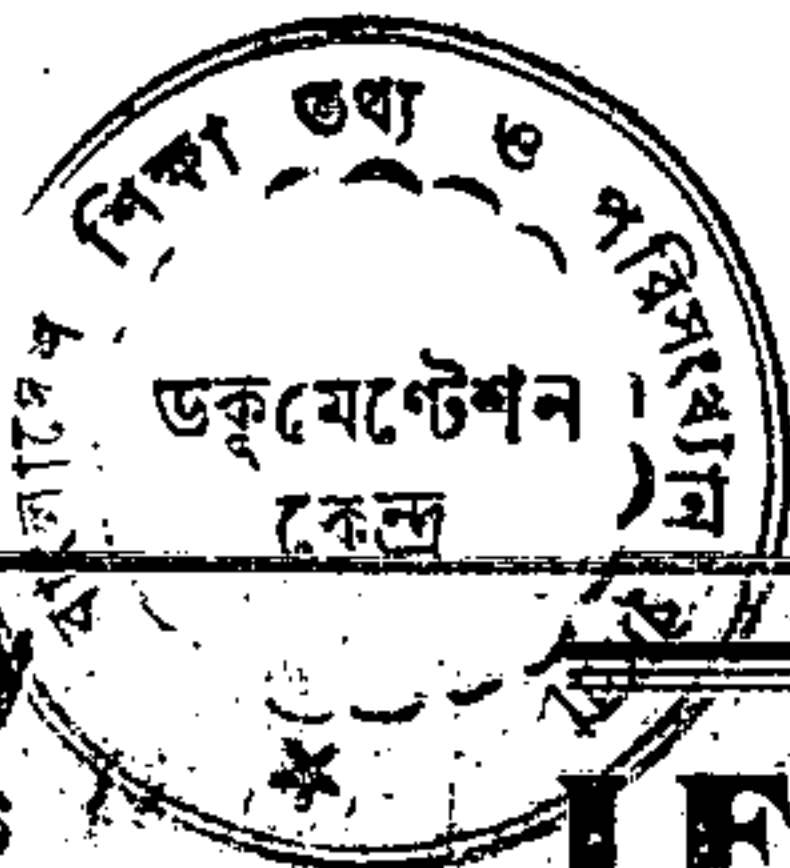


07



University vacations and cultures

Some of our universities decided recently not to avail their winter vacation this year. They also decided to reduce their weekly holiday from two days to one day. These decisions had been taken by the authorities concerned for making up the losses in academic sessions suffered by them. Such a gesture on the part of the authorities of different universities is no doubt very encouraging. The respected teachers of the universities are specially to be congratulated for these decisions because they are to bear the main burden of these decisions for taking the additional classes of their students at times when they are normally supposed to relax.

But it is surprising that a section of students who are supposed to gain most in their learning process reportedly protested against these decisions particularly against the cancellation of winter vacation. They are learnt to have protested on the ground that this decision goes against our long traditional culture. In explaining the matter they say that the winter season in our country is particularly noted for preparing various kinds of na-

tive pithas (cakes) for a long time. Some students therefore, claim that by cancelling the winter vacation the authorities of different universities have deprived them at a traditional pitha festival or pitha eating ceremony generally held in the Bengali month of Paush specially in the village areas.

Actually the women-folk of this country were very much accustomed to enjoy a winter pitha festival in the month of Paush and they always liked to entertain their kith and kins (husbands, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters etc.) with as many kinds of pithas as they can.

But our question is can our people enjoy the so called pitha festival now as they could do it even two decades ago? Or can our womenfolk have necessary time, resources or mental make up to prepare so many delicious types of pithas for their near and dear ones? More than 80 per cent of the people in rural Bangladesh where this pitha festival used to be held in winter are now living below subsistence level due to which their womenfolk too

are to work hard beyond their domestic boundary in an effort to earn their living.

Over and above the want of time and opportunity majority of our rural people have hardly any means to enjoy any pitha festival. On the other hand the town or city dwellers too can not enjoy this festival due to ever growing struggle and haste which are some important peculiarities of the present day urban life. So the pitha festival has almost gone away or is going to be vanished from our traditional cultural life.

We therefore fail to understand why a section of our students should raise any objection against the cancellation of winter vacation by the university authorities and claim that the decision of the authorities is against our traditional culture. The pitha festival can hardly be considered a part of our cultural life now. Secondly the necessity of covering the losses of academic sessions is far more important in our national life rather than enjoying a pitha festival. So we would expect that the students will

cooperate with the university authorities in making good the losses incurred in our educational sessions.

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LETTERS FROM READERS