

Sunset Rule

Much heat is often generated over the question of whether or not the time-honoured "sunset rule" in girls' hostels should be done away with. The said rule stipulates that boarders must return to their shelter before dusk — for security's sake — or else face the music from the house tutor/proctor/provost. In other words, the hostel, to all intents and purposes, is a ZENANA and will remain so as long as university authorities, guardians and the bulk of the boarders are happy. According to the proctor of Rajshahi University, ninety per cent of the girl students there have no quarrel with the "Victorian" rule.

Understandably, it does not apply to boys — no MURDANA for them ! And this, many freedom-loving females, mentally on the threshold of the twentyfirst century, find hard to swallow. It is discriminatory, oppressive, un-democratic and anti-enlightenment, they grumble.

One can hardly argue when they point out that in a highly competitive world this anachronistic rule puts bright young girls at a disadvantage, vis-a-vis their male class mates, both in terms of after-dusk library work as well as many enriching extra-curricular activities.

Those who chafe at the bit, as it were, could perhaps take heart from the RU Proctor's words. Under the rules there's no bar to staying out late, provided prior permission has been granted by the hostel authorities. Guardians' communications with the hostel, to that effect, we are told, are also honoured.

The spirited ones should therefore be less sore about the fetters that a patriarchal mind-set puts on them. Indeed, this discrimination may be positive, considering the culture of "mastaanism" that has overtaken society. Nothing less than a murdana (to shut up mastaans) can make life safe, particularly for girls.