

TEENS and TWENTIES

Jahangirnagar: A University Without a Graduation!

by Shamsad Mortuza

THESE are the last of the academicians (not Mohicans) of their batch who survived the bullets, batons and tear gas shells. These are the few fortunate who had their tendons away from the celestial knives (tsk... tsk... a pity for the divine agents!) These are the few good men who (sharpened their knives?) confined themselves to books (and butters). And these are the youngmen who gurgled the scripts of their ancestors and made best use of the highway to toilets to amble through the examinations. These are the graduates

Now, at the end of one journey and at the beginning of another — they take part in the most cherished academic ritual. Donned in blue-black robes and graduation caps, these passing out men join the pageant to get their terminal certificates — the recognition of their long hard work and patience. And the person to stretch out the rolled papers with 'ponytail' is none other than the Chancellor, the constitutional head of the university.

Well, this is the least glamour and charisma that one can expect at the end of his academic career. Yet this usual practice of convocation (graduation in the American lingua) is not practised in our universities. Mainly in the name of political unrest, the graduates are deprived of their real certificates. Consequently, they had to be content with the provisional certificates received from the left hands of the saucy clerks.

Some of the universities, however, have managed to stage this academic show-down. But even after twenty four

years of its inception, Jahangirnagar University have failed to accord its graduates with real certificates, which, by provision, is given only at the convocation ceremony.

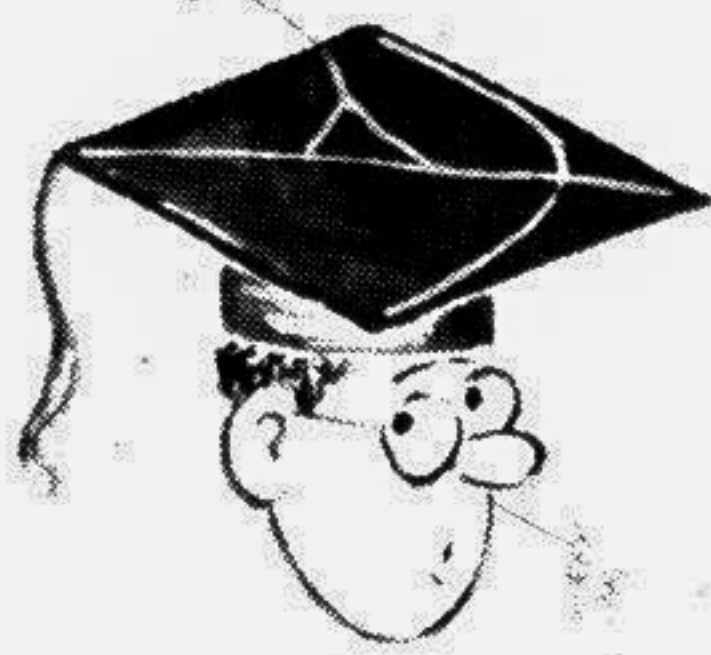
The university was formally inaugurated as a Muslim university in 1970 with only 150 students. The first batch, delayed by the Liberation War and volatile political atmosphere, passed out in 1976. Since then the university has produced 4907 graduates and another 4050 Masters degree holders. With full residential accommodation, Jahangirnagar has a present strength of 3912 students in 20 different departments under three faculties and one institute. Save some sporadic incidents, this university is considered to be less troubled with congenial atmosphere — probably, an atrophy of staying 20 miles away from the capital.

Naturally, holding of convocation is a long running demand of the students. Particularly, the students with their access in the Senate remained consistently vocal about this issue. "Almost in every Senate session, this issue is raised. After much discussion, it is invariably felt that convocation should be held," said one university official preferring anonymity. "That's that!" he added sarcastically.

The same tone was echoed by a Senate member who represents the registered graduates.

"For the powerseekers, convocation is the carrot which they swing before us — the possible voters," remarked the Senator, a former student of the university.

"Promises of convocation are all we have before the polls



which are never realised afterwards," he added.

After all these bitter remarks, it was really refreshing to hear the recently appointed Vice-Chancellor who had already taken initiatives to have the convocation ceremony held by early next year.

"I will apprise the Syndicate about the matter and take all possible steps to stage convocation," the VC Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"May be we will have the silver jubilee of the university and the convocation ceremony at the same time," the respected professor of Economics pointed the oasis in the desert.

He further informed that he has already initiated correspondence with other universities to share their experience of convocation. Only Agricultural University was able to organise a real convocation ceremony while Dhaka University held a special convocation to award an honorary degree to Nobel Laureate Prof Abdus Salam in March 1993.

Giving away certificates to

all the graduates, however, is not an easy task. It will take lot of effort and money.

"I have already earmarked the Prime Minister for an allocation of Tk 3 crore for the additional arrangement of the convocation," the VC informed, and added, "the money, if sanctioned will be used to develop the roads and the telecommunication."

Asked about the long delay, Prof Chowdhury recalled that an attempt was made to organise the ceremony in the early 80's. The death of the then Chancellor President Ziaur Rahman and the succession of Lieutenant General H M Ershad had it postponed.

"The students were not eager to get certificates from an autocrat," he added.

Interestingly, one of the evils to foil the convocation in most of the universities is the controversies surrounding the Chancellors. After coming to the power of the elected democratic government, many of the universities had their certificates from the Prime Minister. The ex-officio Chancellor, the President delegated his power to the PM to carry on this academic responsibility. Such delegation, however was not observed to carry out the responsibility in the Jahangirnagar University.

The alternative custom that the outgoing students have launched in the name of 'shambartan' or rag festival is actually a devalued projection of our students. Indeed, regular holding of convocation will be like a fresh shower in the academic desert. And if this ceremony is included in the academic calendar, it is felt that, the very glamour of the ceremony will abate the existing session jam.

their guts.

So one of the dogs, a white small one which cannot tolerate light, jumped almost to my lap. "Oh! so it likes me!"

Oh no! It started chasing me. Help! Help! And there I was, a grown up guy running from doors to corridors to garden and staircase.

At last Shimuli intervened and caught "Ziggy" — that was its name.

"Ziggy is a crackpot," Shimuli analysed its character and added, "It loves to bite people."

"Get it out of my sight or I'll go home right now," I announced, analysing my deep emotions as fear.

"Okay," Shimuli replied, "In fact I will keep it out of your sight. I will lock Ziggy in a room. You start painting."

Whew! Accompanied by rock and roll I started painting designs on the floor of the drawing room of the house. I was pretty fast. It took me an hour to make the floor messy. I was thinking whether the floor should be covered with a giant carpet for the sake of aesthetics when nature called me "Yuhoo! Yuhoo. Sharier, it's high time you go to toilet."

Indeed my "mini-toilet" pressure became so intense that I could not walk.

I crawled to the nearest toilet and almost debugged myself as I got in there when the whole Vishuvius burst into my ear.

"Uri Baprey!" I screamed. Ziggy was right behind me barking viciously.

"I am dead!" I screamed and started running to the toilet door. Ziggy's teeth were about to set on my bottom, when I at last managed to open the door and ran into the corridor.

The corridor was full of people. My jeans were down to my knees.

Later Shimuli apologised for her lack of foresight in locking Ziggy in that toilet.

already married. Sometimes I'm even tortured at home. Life has become unbearable for me. Please help.

Anonymous.

If the reason for your not getting married is just your complexion then those proposals were not even worth considering. There are many beautiful women who are dark and sometimes it is their dark complexion that make them so attractive. You really should not worry about this; concentrate on being a strong, beautiful person inside that will surely get you the right mate. Nobody

You might think of taking up a job to boost your confidence.

Working Without Shame

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

JAMIL is a Sophomore at Harvard University with a 4.0 GPA (Grade Point Average). With a partial scholarship and no allowance from home in Bangladesh, he has no option but to work, in order to support himself. Jamil has two jobs, one as a part time assistant at the admissions office at school and the other as a waiter at a small cafe in downtown Boston.

At the cafe Jamil waits on tables, takes orders, serves the food clears the tables and sometimes has to wash dishes. For all this he makes good money, at least enough to pay the bills. When asked if he would take on a job like this if he were in Dhaka Jamil laughs and says: "Are you crazy? My father would kill me! You can't do such things in Bangladesh". Yet in Boston, Jamil feels no shame or indignity about doing menial jobs, after all, most students work and are proud of it.

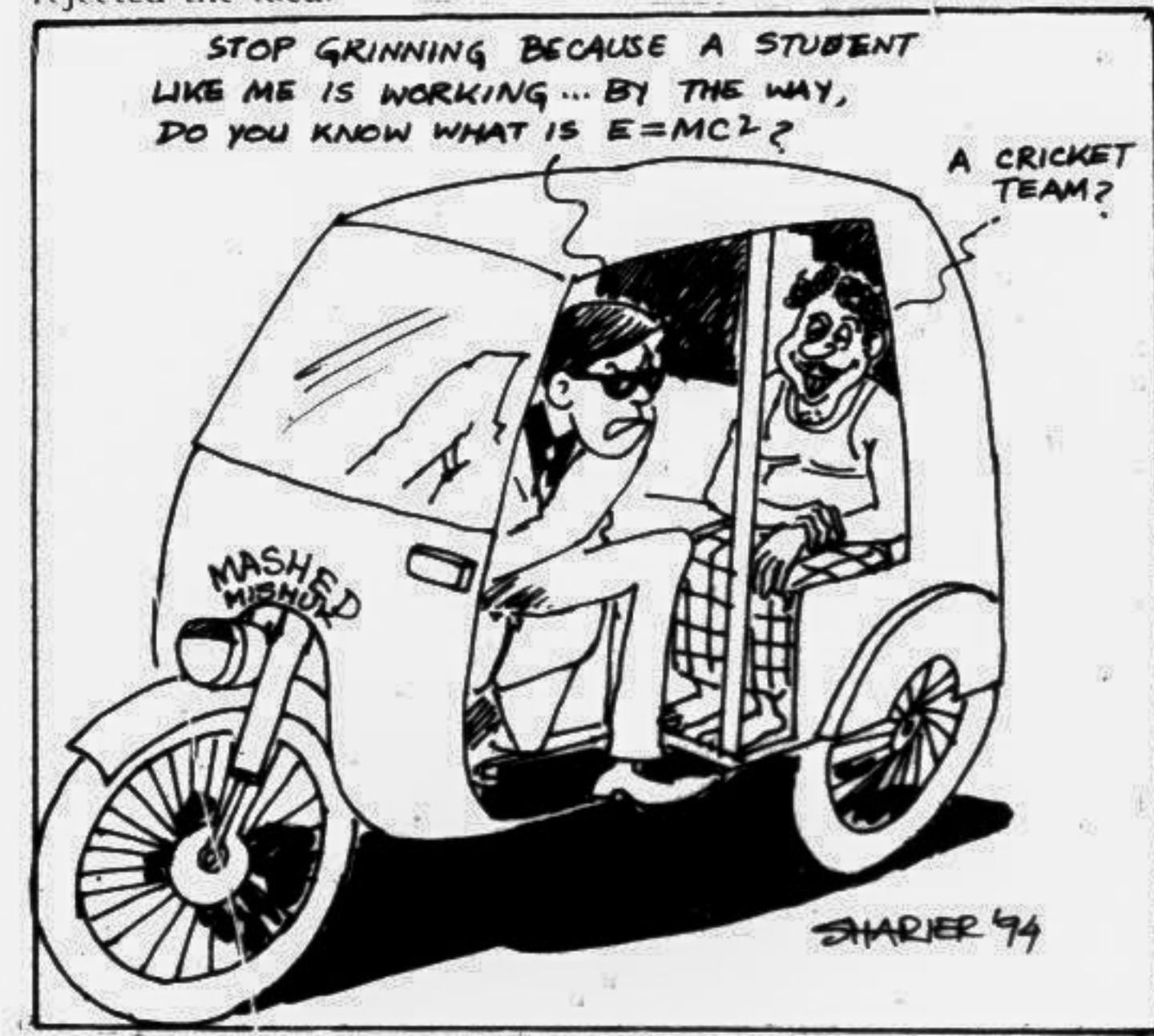
Why then is it so shameful for a young person from a middle class background in Bangladesh to be working in say, a hotel, a restaurant or as a driver? The reason behind this can be traced back to anthropological and social factors. We are still very much a feudal society where class distinctions are great and a system of hierarchy prevails. There is no such thing as the dignity of labour. Young people grow up with the false value that certain tasks are just 'beneath them' and so should be avoided at all costs.

This kind of snobbery begins at home and is somehow more intense among males. Sunjay is a student of Economics at Dhaka University. He comes from a middle class family and has two younger sisters. Sometimes when the house maid is absent Sunjay's mother and sisters share the chores — cooking, cleaning, washing clothes. Sunjay has never done an ounce of household work, never cleaned his room and never washed his clothes — he was never expected to. His father is a retired government official.

These may include: odd jobs such as cleaning somebody's lawn, helping to repair a roof, doing light housework or more regular ones like babysitting, movies.

Yet there have been attempts to change this feudal attitude and bring about practical results. The Bikalpa Project for example initiated by Lutfur Rahman Sharar, former MD of Sonali Bank, started quite successfully, employing many university students to drive taxis and earn money. For some reason, however, it could have been financial infeasibility or social or political discouragement, this project has flopped and is unlikely to pick up in the near future. Another similar project that has similarly failed is the Mishuk project initiated by

so few vacancies, his chances are quite slim. He is surprised, even shocked, to find out one day that one of his classmates Kabir, a boy from a similar background, works parttime as a waiter in a local five-star hotel. Kabir says that he can get Sunjay a similar job if he is interested. But Sunjay shuns the idea. What would people say? How could he, a university student from a middle class family be a waiter, basically a servant? Yet the pay was better than many government jobs and would certainly help the family expenses. In the end Sunjay's pride or rather false pride took over and he rejected the idea.



There are thousands of unemployed young people roaming around the streets, frustrated, disillusioned and have given up hope of ever having a decent life. Many have Masters Degrees but still do not 'qualify' for the desired jobs because they don't have proper backing.

In Western countries there are plenty of temporary jobs available for people who want to make some money before permanent work is obtained. These may include: odd jobs such as cleaning somebody's lawn, helping to repair a roof, doing light housework or more regular ones like babysitting,

servant in a restaurant, secretarial work at an office or delivering pizzas. Unfortunately in this country all these jobs are done by a particular socio-economic group commonly known as the poorer class. The branding of this kind of work as menial and unprestigious has discouraged many middle or lower middle class youths from taking up such jobs on the one hand and employers from offering such jobs to these youths on the other. This has just created a deadlock with a situation where a young person may starve but not take on a job that somehow does not 'fit in with his status'. This only happens in Hindi

Yet this should not discourage people from initiating such projects that attempt to help students financially. Prospective employers should encourage students and offer them opportunities to work. The work could be offered in the form of paid internships or on a temporary basis, so that students have the opportunity to look for permanent jobs while at the same time earn a little money to cover day to day expenses. Jobs can include working as a librarian, an office assistant or secretary, a sales person at a shop or even a waiter in a cafeteria or restaurant or as a chaffer.

All this will be possible of course only if certain prejudices are removed from our psyche. While young people must discard their inhibitions and pretensions about doing certain kinds of work, their mentors and guardians should encourage them and instill a sense of pride in their work. After all, an honest day's work no matter what kind, is far more prestigious than years of corruption in a high office.

Patuati. These producers were initially in other trades such as soap wholesale business or something equally unrelated to music. This flourishing business of music is going through changes now because fans here are not selective whatever comes in or is a hit anywhere abroad is a hit here. The people here are influenced by the weather very much, says Tutul, owner of Electro Voice, a producing shop in Patuati.

"Original music production came to a halt over three to four months ago excepting few duets, cheap raps, says a hardcore music lover. "When I talked to a producer this bad trend he said that was because of the just finished World Cup and HSC exams.

"We bring out a cassette when the composition is good, vocals are melodious and we don't encourage bad bands. Tutul says. "Melodious songs are always hits with people, rap is the style now, then we bring out classical songs by famous artists. At the moment my Binash O Binash, a natok (drama), followed by Gitanjali a poetry cassette and Topon Chowdhury's Amar Prithibi are on the top list," informs Tutul.

"The music passion here is optional for the majority it is just light entertainment and thus its sales fluctuate all the time," he says "however, there is no professional record of sales or how much the consumers buy, because there are major loopholes in cassette producing system," reports Rubel, a doctor cum a musician. "The company releases a certain quantity which are in turn pirated or copied and hit the market with no official record and so the top chart list here, is very hard to track down," he continues, describing his experiences with producers.

There are about 50 to 60 companies which can switch on and off their business line but what about the trend of music here? When will the people be selective and prefer music, not because its the trend now but for its quality, innovativeness and originality. There are still many unknown good bands that are shadowed because the fungus of mushrooming mediocry bands.

Wrapped in Rap!

by Raffat Binte Rashid

body waist, hands, necks, ears, nose and lips and so on.

Given the trend one has to ask: where is it leading our musical world? If Bangla rap like 'bathroom, bathroom' is the next generation of music or Chand Dekhichi Mon Bhore Na which says, 'she is like moon', then we are sure to witness great slopes and heights in the music graph.

And of course Channel V, ZeeTV is only spicing our taste, and anything for free is delicious.

Almost in every cassette store, at every stop of big roads or small alleys you will hear Hindi numbers like Tu cheez bari hai must must whose crude translation is something like 'you are an atom bomb' or churake dil mera gorla chali.

stealing away my heart, where are you going, beautiful! These songs are all translated in Bangla some here in Dhaka and some in Calcutta.

In the midst of these super hits and their parodies, cheap rap and silly love songs of unknown bands, the originality of bigger bands or solo artists are lost. As a result, the recording company or cassette producing companies which are not professional music lovers or producers for that matter, unlike the West, are confused with their business. They are not sure which are genuine bands and which are here for the sake of having a band and a cassette to their name. They don't know who to patronize.

The main cassette producing companies are in

All About Them



MONISHA Koirala, the 1942 girl comes from a family that was into politics, medicine and engineering and she was all set to become a doctor; when Subhash Ghai spotted her at a party in Delhi and offered her a dream debut in *Saudagar*.

Coming from Nepal's first family she is politically very conscious. 'Bombay' her next film also has a political plot where she plays a Muslim girl who's in love with a Hindu boy, being played by Arvind Swamy and the film's all about the complications which arise following the riots. But ravishing Monisha with a handful of good films knows this could be her turning point. One day, she wants her name to be in the same place as those of Nargis, Madhu Bala, Suchitra Sen. They are her role model.

Funny Memories Sibling Rivalry

by Sharier Khan



had set a booby trap on the top of the door he placed a saucpan full of water. When I entered the room it fell on my head soaking me completely.

"Haw Haw Haw" I heard his laughter from the verandah. "Why you Badmas!" I screamed and ran for the "slightly opened door" of verandah.

WHAM! The whole sky fell on my head! It was a 5 kg 'Encyclopaedia of SPACE' set on the top of the door. I lost again and with a loser's face I watched him laughing to death.

GOING TO THE DOGS:

I am a cartoonist. Not an 'Alpanas' (one who draws Alpanas), mind you. Yet my friends and relatives often

force me to do some 'alpana' on floors on occasions like wedding, especially on 'Gaye Halud' (Turmarifying the body).

So one day this friend forced me to do some alpanas on her sister's wedding. I knew I would mess it up yet I gave her — Shimuli — a long list of paints and brushes (which I had planned to 'misappropriate' afterwards). Shimuli is the wife of my friend Hamid. I had never been to Shimuli's place.

When I entered Shimuli's house I noticed three cute doggies. One German Shepherd, and two what-its-types. I love dogs because of their playful nature. But I hate

I am an animal lover. For many years I've been wanting a pet puppy. But my parents think that it will only be trouble. I read in class five and I'm sure I can take care of a dog. We also have a large lawn where I can keep a dog. My parents think that I won't be able to take care of it properly. How can I make them understand?

Shad Banani

Being a pet owner is a big responsibility you have to make sure that your pet is well fed, washed, properly trained etc. You have to give your pet a lot of your time. Also, having a pet means taking care of it for life. You cannot stop just because

Matters of the Heart

DEAR Readers, This is a new column for all of you to let out your true feelings. As the title suggests you can ask for advice on anything that is causing you distress or anxiety or something that you are just curious about. We will try to advise you as wisely as possible. Since the answers to your questions will be given by a lay person who is not a professional psychologist but someone who is genuinely interested in helping you, please use your discretion in taking the advice seriously or not. Please send in your questions as early as possible. You can give your name and address, use a pseudonym or just sign the letter as 'anonymous'. All letters should be dated and mailed to:

Editor, Teens & Twenties, The Daily Star, Hs 11, Rd 3, Dhansondhi, Dhaka.

Maybe they'll be convinced. I'm a 25-year old girl. I have a dark complexion therefore my parents have been trying to get me married, but in vain. My younger sisters are