

TEENS TWENTIES

A Journey to the Frontiers of Medical Knowledge

"Oh! you're studying medicine" or "Oh! you're going to be a doctor" is the usual response I get when I introduce myself around as a med student. Next follows "I hope you come to see us when we are old and sick without any fees."

Life in a Medical College is not as glamorous as it looks, in fact for students its the other way round — before seeking to heal, they must first walk through fire.

The path that the med students have picked will break some of them while it will force others to confront their most closely held secrets, dreams and fears. The people have turned doctors into something superior, thinking that they could live upto their expectations by offering themselves up for better treatment and expecting the best in return. But paradoxically the doctors are the most vulnerable of human beings. There are a number of cases of drug addiction and alcoholism among them, because they are painfully aware that they cannot live upto the peoples' expectations, their anguish is very much intense. We are not God. As much as we want to save peoples' lives, we can't. We have to accept the fact that people die.

On our orientation day at med school, I remember the Principal saying, "Welcome to this institution, you are the cream of the society as you have been filtered from thousands of students to join us today. We hope you will live up to our expectation of you". Never again in the next five years did we see so many distinguished physicians gathered in a single room. We were collectively getting into a journey to the frontiers of medical knowledge-which is where we were to begin our own individual explorations in the vast territory of suffering and disease. Perhaps some one among us was meant to find a cure for leukemia, diabetes, AIDS, Cancer or even the common cold. There are thousands of diseases in this world but medical science only has cure for a certain number of diseases, the rest is guess work.

The day after orientation, we started the first of our four hundred and fifty-five required hours of gross anatomy. Those amongst us who had dissected frogs during HSC tried to pretend that the species Homo Sapiens would be a similar exercise. But none had ever put a knife into real flesh and sliced open a human body. The first thing we noticed was the smell

coming from the chemical compounds used to keep the bodies from decaying. Rows of human bodies, faces unknown, lay there in one hall room. Most were accident or starvation cases or those who died of cold in the streets and were never claimed by relatives. We were taken there by our professor, a very distinguished and respected man. He said to us, "The bodies, before you, were once living, breathing human beings. They were generous enough to leave their bodies to science, so that even in death they could serve mankind. I want you to treat them with respect." It was a kind of paradox that, we, who have come to preserve the living must first preserve the dead.

We wondered who it would be, among us to be the first to faint or throw up, or walk out of the room, and to quit med school completely. It seemed that there were a few volunteers.

In med school we experience pain, anxiety, joy — what's its really like to be on the cutting edge. Picking up bets to spend the night in the morgue. Playing a prank on someone. After the first class of dissection, the boys tried to scare the wits out of the girl. The boys sometimes cover themselves with white sheets, and dance on the morgue roof in a ghostly manner calling out the names of some of their female friends at 1 O'clock past midnight. As the morgue is placed by the side of the ladies hostel, the girls can very well see what was going on.



Only a fraction of their four hundred and fifty five required hours of intense anatomy studies. — Star Photo by Anis-ur-Rahman

by Lubna H Qureshi

It is an interesting scene to watch us when we prepare ourselves for the exams. We march mutter and memorize and between the 5 second break that we spare ourselves — we curse and feel pity for ourselves for choosing this path. While we are slaving away, the whole world is having a good time. This interesting phenomenon of muttering and talking to oneself is actually a common site displayed in the psychiatry ward.

The first professional examination which is completing

tionship we have then is with chemical compounds, bones, muscles, nerves, histological specimens. Staying awake the whole night is a problem, and this each person sorts out his or her way. Some use tea, coffee, while others prefer stimulant pharmacological products like amphetamine, stimetel. To relieve the tension, some also use propranolol — which is actually a selective beta-blocker and slows the heart rate and also has its own side effect.

In Histology, we studied the distributions of healthy tissues in the body and in Pathology

real properties of the drug taught us to write good prescriptions. Forensic medicine gives us a view on the cause of death of the person and post-mortem is done in cases of accident and where there is a suspicion of foul play. The vast empire of surgery, gynae and medicine with its many branches is for the final set up of being a doctor. But amongst all these, med school has an uncanny way of making students anti-social, paranoid, weird.

In med school, we see in its crudest form, the survival of the fittest. Not the smartest, as



Before seeking to heal they must first walk through fire. — Star Photo by Anis-ur-Rahman

the 1st and 2nd year together is really tough: Anatomy, Histology, Physiology and Biochemistry. People actually freak out from tension. It's like something we never experienced before. The only rela-

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Between Angel and Ape

by Shamsad Mortuza

"PASSENGERS and Students are restricted on the bumper and on the roof. The notice of the Minibus Owners' Association inscribed on the near of a speeding minibus, at a city outlet, left a trail of thought behind.

It is quite obvious, at least from the sign, that students are no longer considered as the members of the highly available homo sapiens species which customarily fulfil the criterion of 'passenger'. Students have visibly threatened the position of the policemen, featuring in the bold headline of an old joke: Road Mishap Claimed Three Men and One Policeman. (No harm intended to the men in Khaki and for their satisfaction, the joke has a Noakhali edition too).

However, the fact remains: students are regarded as sub-human. This is an extreme assertion, but, I believe, rightly so. True, students once spear-headed all the movements that culminated in the Liberation War. They played the key role in sending an autocrat to the state guest house. They featured in the canonical works of Tagore and Nazrul. And now they appear at the mercy of the bus owners!

Some of these businessmen have even put up an implied warning at the very entrance of their vehicles: 'No half concession. Well, some of them are generous enough to charge half of the actual fare. In exchange, they (half or nil educated bus conductors) hold the right to scrutinize the identity of the students.

Students are not the earning members of the society, and if we are to believe in the words of the national celebrities, students are the future of our nation. Naturally, they can well deserve the concession which otherwise is used for the uniformed men whose only vocation is to be in the foreign mercenary missions and to appease the global fathers. After all, who will fight with Bangladesh? — specially when the contenders are enjoying an economic, cultural allegiance from you-know-whom. At the same time, it should also be remembered that students are misusing the privileges they are endowed with.

A couple of years back, hundreds of transport workers clashed with the students of the Jahangirnagar University. The clash ensued when a truck met an accident while overtaking a university bus on the Dhaka-Aricha highway. The students, irked by the reckless driving, wanted to give the truck driver a treat but were

taken completely by surprise by the nearby brickfield labours. Enforced by these new iron hands, the transport workers carried out an hour-long attack on the boys and girls. They held them as captives, ransacked the university buses, and even pretended to light fire to a vehicle with university teachers and students inside, and not to mention the volley of verbal abuses. The students retaliated by laying a siege on the highway and damaging scores of vehicles.

This traumatic incident illustrates the outburst of the harboured anger of the transport workers the students. Many a times, the students took to the city roads and damaged vehicles reacting to the slightest provocation. Think of the clash between medical students and the

of subhuman. They have had the fruit of knowledge from cable TV, VCR and western propaganda and they have had themselves cursed. Like Adam and Eve, they have learnt about shame; shame of being poor and backward. Thereby, they ape whatever they think suitable for them — let it be a gun or an injection.

There is no reason to ignore the small sign emblazoned on the body of the buses. It upholds the general attitude towards students. The taxpayers are frustrated to see their successors misappropriating their money — the concession offered by the government. Ask any shopkeeper of Elephant Road New Market or Century Arcade — for them, students are a nightmare. Ask any political leader — for them, students are the magic lamp of



truck labours after the death of a student Rumana; or think of the students of the Notre Dame College who unleashed a terror in the city after the death of their beloved teachers.

This is just one side of the story: the tale of accident and its consequent revenge. The other side of the fence is not greener. Students are now being identified and projected as terrorists, extortionists, addicts and what not. In all the police stations, you will find the portfolio of the hotshot student leaders on the board of wanted criminals. Such has become the established niche of the academicians.

At the social level, students have lost their hard-earned former vigour and glory. They have derided themselves from the superhuman stature to that

Aladdin with genie of fire power. Ask any contractor for them students are both boon and bane.

The term 'student' should be applied to a group of youngmen who are in the process of preparing themselves for the real world. They are learning the rules of the world in which they inhabit. Ironically enough, life itself is providing the students with pistols instead of pens, pen-sidlys instead of ink, illusions instead of reality.

Why then should the students be severed apart from society (as crystallized in the disintegration of passenger)? They are not the cancer, rather they are affected by the cancerous growth in the society. It is the society with all its callousness, has resulted in the catastrophe for the students.

The Blind Students of Dhaka University: An Untold Story of Challenging life

by MK Morshed

THE Dhaka University was called 'the Oxford of the East', but that is history now. At present there are about 28,000 students enrolled the most brilliant students of Bangladesh get the opportunity to study here. Of them, the blind students are a small fraction.

There are many blind people in Bangladesh. Among them, only 1 per cent get opportunity to pursue their education at University level, the number of them are still fewer. In spite of many problems they are able to compete with general students. They have established the example that any handicap is bound to succumb to will-power.

There are 26 blind students in Dhaka University at the moment. They are enrolled their studies in different subjects, like English, Law, Public Administration, Social Welfare, Sociology, Political Science, Islamic History and Culture, Islamic Studies and General History. Among them, six are post-graduates and twenty are under-graduate students, four are females and 22 males. Most of them are staying in different residential halls of Dhaka University.

But they face problems at every step of their struggle for survival.

Ershad Ali, a third year student of Social Welfare says, "The problems which we are facing in society, are not due to our handicap, but because of the unconsciousness of society. Blind people are not yet accepted in our society."

The education system of the sightless student is braille. In the class-room, they follow teacher's lecture by audio-recording or writing in braille

But some problems arises here. Ershad Ali explains, "sometimes few teachers put down their lecture on the black-board and do not speak. As a result, we fail to follow the lectures and suffer."

Mir Ashraf Hossain 2nd year student of Public Administration points out, "We depend on our class-mates' co-operation, but it is regrettable that, most of our class-mates, especially females express their negative attitude in helping us out. On the other hand, the co-operation of male students is not also satisfactory."

Farzana Taleb, a 3rd year student of Social Welfare Dept, confirms that "There is no opportunity for the sightless to study in library. A separate section should have been reserved for us including modern braille-technology to solve the problems. The syndicate of Dhaka University decided to appoint two readers for blinds in the library during 1988 and present Vice-chancellor also promised it. But it is matter of regret, the Dhaka University authority now forgot their promises."

Talking about their pecuniary condition, Rafiqul Islam, 3rd year students of General History Department informs "It is more expensive for the blind to study than sighted students. We have to pay transport costs, audio recording costs etc, aside from tu-

ition fees. But we get Tk 100 as monthly stipend from Dhaka University which is not sufficient.

In response to a question, Md Khalilur Rahman, 1st year student, Deptt of Political Science says, "We have no opportunity to appear at BCS examinations because, we are declared unfit physically. If we are allowed to appear at BCS special cadre examination, we will be able to carry on our service properly like sighted persons. On the other hand, if the authority of private colleges appoint us in their institutions then, it will be of great help for the blind. The blind people, who are working in colleges and offices are being praised by the students and people for their skills. The Government and the people of Bangladesh should care. Otherwise it is not possible for our Government to solve these problems alone."

Relevantly, Jahangir Alam, 2nd year student of the department of General History also observed that "There should be a quota system in civil services for the blind."

The examination system of the blind is separate from the regular normal students. A sightless student takes part in his examination with the help of a sighted person after recommendation of the University authority. This person helps

the blind by writing and he or she is usually found to be minimum one year junior from them. But problems arises here, as told by Mohosin, 3rd year student of Islamic History and Culture, — getting permission of a helper is more problematic and difficult than taking preparations to take part in the examination. Sometimes after getting permission, the helper refuses to cope. At the last minute the sightless student cannot change his or her helper without permission of the University authority. So a serious problem arises, it is the question of time, money and effort to them" Mohosin adds, "If the University authority hands over this duty to the chairmen of the Departments, then the problem may be solved."

The sightless students of DU are distressed by their uncertain future. They have no guarantee to be established after acquiring higher education. Shah Alam, MA final year of Sociology Department mentions, "We are not sure that we would be employed with our qualifications and handicap. We have been appealing to the Government of Bangladesh but they did not take any step to solve the problems."

In response to the question, what kind of professions were appropriate for blind people, Azhar Ali, 3rd year student of Social Welfare says,

"We are able to serve as teacher in schools and colleges, as project managers, resource teachers, etc in organizations, helping the blind people."

"We have no problem of movement in the University campus. But some problems are created from uncovered manholes and drains," says Sharwar Hossain Khan, 2nd year BSS (Hons) student, Department of Political Science.

He called upon the University authority to be careful in this regard. Mentioning the Western countries like the United States, Britain, France, Germany etc, Md. Jhoshimuddin, 1st year B.S.S student says with confidence that, "There is no difference between sightless and sighted person in those country. But in my country, I am useless." He adds, "If the people in society are cordial, we can get a better chance to life."

The blind students are a part of Dhaka University. They are pursuing their studies competing with general students in same syllabus and same classroom. They proved that physical impairment is not problem for them. Now they are facing several problems every moment. They want the co-operation of the society, not help. So it is a duty of all to solve these problems.

Aspects of Life

by Adnan R Amin

'Levy Shoemake's' comets, 'in person', but I'm sure none of them were brighter than those flaming and raging eyes. Meekly — I entered the class and sat down.

The rest of the period passed uneventfully. Next period was chemistry. The teacher came in, walked to the blackboard and started writing a lot of illegible crap. We were throwing paper balls at each other when she finally turned to us, pointed right at me and let out a thunderous, "Okay — you! yeah — you — the one with big ears — what is an isotope?" I was naturally thunderstruck. I feebly stood up and shakily started, "Isotope is a sort of ice..." "Okay — keep standing." So — I had to keep standing, rest of the period.

During the next period, my friends, who sat immediately behind me threw paper balls at the girls, while the teacher slept profoundly, with his mouth hanging open loosely. One of the boys swiftly delivered a bar right into the enormous pit. We were all giggling away as the teacher woke up with a jerk and unfortunately swallowed the whole thing. It took the old man quite sometime to figure out what was going on. Then he saw all my thirty-two teeth exposed, and all shining in the sun. And for some unknown reason he just assumed that I was the unidentified assailant. He beckoned me to stand up.

Coming back after tiffin hours I sat down slowly. Everything was going wrong today. And I started to ponder whether it was a bad omen. At this point the English teacher

entered the class a bellowed that there was going to be a surprise test on 'King Lear' now. I could not believe my ears. But there was no time to convince myself. I hastily opened my bag and drew out what could be described as "the remains" of my English literature copybook. The boys who sat immediately behind me had used up all the pages to make paper balls, the very ones that got into trouble earlier.....

In test I wrote how Condelia met her father's ghost, and all about Portia and Petruchio in details! The next period was Maths. The teacher came in a bit late and started scribbling on the blackboard. She was trying to work out a rather difficult problem of Trigonometry, when I was, casually asked, "How much does tan 30° equal to?" Ah — there was an opportunity to prove myself. "Twenty-two by seven — that is almost 3.1428571....."

Once again my poor weary feet contained my immense weight for one whole period. The rest of the day in school passed uneventfully except for getting 1.5 in a geography test, out of 10.

I came home exhausted and crestfallen. What a day! I let out a sign of relief. In my room, I found a cousin of mine singing aloud to herself and recording it on my 'use your illusion-II' tape.....

A cold bath washed of my lassitude. Then after lunch, I enjoyed my siesta, watched 'Doozie Howser' and listened to my favourite tapes and songs, sometimes interrupted by a shrill childish voice trying to sing. Everything was fine until, at around twelve o'clock at night, I got my uniform ready, put my books in my bag, opened my diary and found there was a Biology test the next day on a syllabus which was nearly three pages long.