

How to Save Our Universities? Counterproductive Acts

by Hayat Hussain

University Acts have not made the teachers or the universities truly free from the grip of the government... teachers have to act very lowly to satisfy the government and at the same time the university administration is also badly tied up with the government through its nominees in the various statutory committees of the university.

to the very important posts of the Vice-Chancellor and faculty deans. These elections kept the teachers busy round the year in group politics creating disunity and bad blood among themselves and in the process what is affected most is the academic atmosphere of the university. When teachers fight among themselves students cannot be silent watchers. They also feel the line and get involved in the shadow of the national politics. In fact, these Acts also provide for the election of several student representatives to the university senate, which most of the universities have ignored so far and only Dhaka University, having tried once, discontinued.

The election of teachers, as mentioned above, continued to divide the teaching community as never before. In the past the election of the university teachers' association did not have the divisive effect on the teachers as it did not affect their job, career promotion etc., but the election of the deans, syndicate members and the Vice-Chancellor did a lot and so the polarisation often took a swing in favour of those in power. And being in power they could give their blessings to their supporters and such blessing is required only to promote irregularities, especially for undue promotion, scholarship and to protect partymen from charges of corruption etc. On the other hand the door is often closed for the promotion of the opponents, no matter how genuine their cases may be and in this way they are also deprived of foreign scholarships and other benefits. Sometimes these things become a matter of negotiation causing absolutely unprincipled and shameless somersaults of the concerned teachers from one party to the other dismissing the values a teacher should not only stand for but also teach his students. The deans' election divide the teachers of the faculties and those of the syndicate members and the Vice-Chancellor divide the whole university.

The election of the Vice-Chancellor has reduced the

universities to farcical proportions. According to the University Acts of 1973 any Tom, Dick and Harry can contest for the vice-chancellor's post only if he is a graduate of the concerned university. Even a degree pass certificate from any of the affiliated colleges of that university will entitle anybody, whether he is a contractor or shop keeper, to contest for the same. Once, during the Ershad regime, an ordinary college teacher secured the highest number of votes in the senate election of Dhaka University. Fortunately, good sense prevailed on Ershad that instead of installing the Dhaka University teachers, which he had many reasons to do, he appointed a DU teacher who secured the third position in the election. The worst thing about the Vice-Chancellor's election is that the candidates have to go to a large electorate which includes persons as described above and ask for their votes in a way that is not befitting with the dignity of the Vice-Chancellor's post. But the Acts of '73 has forced them to do so promising big contracts to the business class and promotion and other benefits to the teacher voters. The bandwagon of teachers and senate members also follow their chosen candidates and keep on making promises. This is how the polarisation gets a new impetus and the elected Vice-Chancellor instead of being directly appointed by the Government as before, but what happened after that? So far most of the elected Vice-Chancellors had to resign or discontinue in their first or second term of office under the pressure of teachers' movements or resentment as the

Elected V.C.'s Do Not Last

Now, a close observation will reveal another serious contradiction in or after the implementation of these Acts. These Acts were intended to democratise the university administration by having the chosen representatives of the teachers as Vice-Chancellors instead of being directly appointed by the Government as before. But what happened after that? So far most of the elected Vice-Chancellors had to resign or discontinue in their first or second term of office under the pressure of teachers' movements or resentment as the

Vice-Chancellors became or had to become very controversial and partisan because of the prejudiced election system. After the election if they try to be a bit fair and neutral then they will definitely incur the wrath of their own supporters and so it is something like the horns of a dilemma that tend to make their lives very difficult. That is why Prof. Fazle Halim Chowdhury, the first elected Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, possibly, after Prof. Abdul Matin Chowdhury, had to resign in the middle of his second term of office as did his successor, Prof. Shamsul Huq and also Prof. Abdul Mannan. In Chittagong University only two Vice-Chancellors, Prof. Mohammad Ali and Prof. Alamgir Serajuddin were elected by the senate and none of them could complete his term. On the other hand Prof. R. I. Chowdhury who succeeded Prof. Serajuddin with a direct appointment from the Government lasted five years, one year more than the normal tenure although he is considered by many as one of the weakest of the CU Vice-Chancellors. Then, what is so special about the university Acts? If those Vice-Chancellors elected by the Act are more vulnerable to internal pressure and have often to quit before due time causing instability in the university then is it doing good or harm to the universities? These questions need to be seriously pondered by the intellectual leaders and guardians of the country.

It has been mentioned earlier how these Acts have prejudiced the university administration and polarised the teaching into two hostile groups dividing everything in the university on the party line. This has led to Greshams' theory of "bad money driving good money out of circulation" in the university as good teachers and good students are really small in number these days. Most of the outstanding teachers have not only left the universities, they also left this wretched country. Students, who can afford, are going out to India and other countries of Europe and North America while some pre-

fer to enroll themselves in the costly private universities of the country like the North-South or the Independent University. So it is the "bad money" that is now ruling the major universities of the country. These universities have now become dens of criminals where good people dread to enter.

Now, how to stop this rot in our universities? In the beginning I have said the first essential condition is to scrap the Acts of 1973 or, at least, we should be prepared to amend them drastically scrapping most of the elections. Some people tend to get emotional at this and say that the sacred document of Bangabandhu cannot be touched as if he was a Prophet. Had he been alive to see what these Acts have done to the universities, he himself would have abolished them long ago. Cheap sentiment should not blur our vision or wisdom where greater national interest is involved. Which is more important — the Act or the nation? The choice should be clear to any patriotic man.

'73 Acts have Not Reduced Govt. Influence

Another intriguing aspect of the '73 Acts, it should be remembered here, is that they do not diminish or reduce Government influence in the internal affairs of the university. There are a sizeable number of Government nominees in the senate, the highest statutory body of the university where they can play a key role at the time of Vice-Chancellor's panel election. The most powerful executive body of the university, syndicate, also has four Government/Chancellor's nominees. Out of seven there are about three Chancellor's nominees in every selection board that deals with the appointment and promotion of associate professors and professors. There are also Government nominees in the Academic Council and in the governing bodies of the institutes. So the Government is there everywhere. Only the university knows how it is still suffering

for this. The files that go to the Chancellors' office, always via the Education Minister as a rule, get stuck for months, if not years. But things are at it's worst at the time of the vice-chancellor's election and appointment. In the earlier days when the Act was not there the Government had a wide range of choice for such an appointment and teachers had nothing much to do about it. But the Act has limited the choice to a panel of three persons elected by the senate from which the Government has to choose one. Here, on the one hand the Government is competent person and on the other a new polarisation begins among the teachers in support of the three elected candidates. These teachers can go to any length or stoop very low to curry favour of the Government cajoling the respective ministers, bureaucrats, politicians and finally the Chancellor for their respective candidates. Even if all the three candidates are elected from the same panel or group these nasty things cannot be avoided because of the greed for power or that exalted post of the Vice-Chancellor. So the end result is that these Acts have not made the teachers or the universities truly free from the grip of the Government. On the other hand, as stated above, teachers have to act very lowly to satisfy the Government and at the same time the university administration is also badly tied up with the Government through its nominees in the various statutory committees of the university. So what good has this new legislation done to the universities?

Abolition of Student Politics

The next important thing is the abolition of student politics. The atmosphere now obtaining on most of the campuses is anything but academic. If there is a referendum on student politics 90% of the people are likely to vote against and this national mood was rightly perceived by President, Justice Shahabuddin who made a public statement about two years ago advising the Government to ban student politics. There was a mixed reaction about this in the political as well as intellectual circle who, actually, spoke from their respective party standpoint as they love their party more than their country. There is hardly any doubt that the strong political ideology of the pre-liberation student politics has now given way to vandalism and greed for money and in the process they have become miscreants or instruments of torture for their political mentors. Thus the student politicians of those days who were loved and respected most by the people are hated most today.

Next: The Blemished Facade

The author is a teacher in History and ex-Dean of Arts Faculty, Chittagong University.

In Memoriam

Dr Mahanambata Brahmachari

by Priyabrata Brahmachari

HIS Divine grace Dr Mahanambata Brahmachari, a spiritual leader, president of Mahanam Sampradaya and Bangladesh Sant Mahamandal, champion of Soantan Dharma and pioneer of the religion of humanity passed away at the age of 96 at Calcutta, India on October 18, 1999, leaving millions of followers across the sub-continent in profound grief and despair.

Born at village Khaliskota in Barisal district of the then Bengal of British India on December 25, 1904, Dr Mahanambata Brahmachari joined Sree Angan, Faridpur, the tila bhumi of Lord Jagatbandhu. He obtained his masters degrees from Calcutta University in Sanskrit and Philosophy secur-



ing first class first position in Sanskrit in 1930.

In compliance with the invitation of the President of the World Fellowship of Faiths, Dr Mahanambata Brahmachari was sent by the President of Mahanam Sampradaya Sreepad Mohendrajee to attend the World Fellowship conference held at Chicago in the USA in the year 1933. He was the second man to attend the World Religious conference to represent Hinduism. The other was the great monk Swami Vivekananda who attended the Parliament of Religion at the same platform in 1893.

There Dr Mahanambata Brahmachari delivered four lectures making the audience listen to him spell bound. His speeches were widely acclaimed in the USA.

Just after the World Fellowship Conference, he was appointed International Secretary and was deeply engaged in the activities of World Fellowship movement.

He was sent to London to take part and deliver lecture in the second International Fellowship Assembly in 1936 where he made commendable speeches and visited several European countries on good-will lecture tour. In 1938, he as the International Secretary of movement, visited 63 leading American cities on good-will lecture tour and delivered 354 speeches.

He was the guest lecturer at 29 universities and colleges of America and also lectured at scores of high schools and social civic clubs there. On invitation, he visited several places in Canada and delivered lectures filled with profound spiritual knowledge. Thereafter he left for India in February, 1939.

He wrote about 50 books on Hindu scriptures and philosophy such as Veda Bichinta, Gita Dhyana, Upanishad Bhavana, Chandhi Chinta, Srimat Vagabata Bhashya, Gour Katha, Udhava Sandesh and Vaisnava Vedanto. All the books are highly appreciated by the spiritually enlightened people of the world. Besides, he wrote innumerable essays which also earned immense appreciations.

He obtained Ph.D on Vaisnava Vedanta from Chicago University in 1937. He was conferred D. Litt degree from Vrindavan University and Mahamahopadhyay title by the Tirupati Sanskrit University and Sita Ram Das Omkar Nath Sanskrit Shiksha Parishad for his outstanding contribution to Indian philosophy.

He had to his credit the erection of Maths, Temples, in Nabadwip, Puri, Vrindaban, Krishnanagar, Calcutta in India and at several places in Bangladesh.

During the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, he took a vow not to take rice until Bangladesh was liberated from subjugation of the then Pakistan. He personally visited thousands of relief camps opened in India where 10 million of people from Bangladesh took shelter.

When the news of his death was broadcast from Radio and Television a shadow of profound grief descended upon the millions of people of the sub-continent. The spiritual world lost a great master of humanity.

The writer is Secretary General, Bangladesh Sant Mahamandal.

A Visit to Goethe's Birthplace

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain



Goethe was born on 28 August, 1749 with a silver spoon in his mouth. His father was a rich man of Frankfurt am Main, which is evident from the house that has been maintained as a museum. Big wall clock, furniture, kitchen utensils, water pipeline, big fireplace, bookshelf etc. reflect the richness of the house where Goethe was born and spent long twenty years.

With its striking skyscrapers, Frankfurt am Main is Germany's most important financial centre, seat of many important banks of the World, besides leading German banks. A large Jewish community used to reside in this 1205-year old imperial city which was partially destroyed during the Second World War.

Romerberg area wore a festive

look where Goethe's Faust was being played. Recitations from Goethe's poems were transmitted from one bank of the river Main to the other through microphones. People crossed bridges to the other side of the river. Jacob Sisters play was also presented to the audience. Bells and drums were played in the open air to create a heavenly sensation. The tolling of bells and singing of choir marked the beginning of Easter.

The exhilarating melodies reverberating through the floodgate of the Betmannstraße, through the darkness of the Schwanenhalle, overwhelmed us, sending us to the height of rapturous delight in the shimmering light of the Romerberg. "We, though, want to walk to the mill." On the Main bank, a

path is discerned. Free from snow, here all signs of late Winter melt away down the river. While passing through the bridge, we noticed excerpts from Odyssee to show respect to Goethe. "Sailing on an ocean in the colour of wine."

With our foot on the other bank, we, like Faust, were rejuvenated. We started along the path towards a new colourful life. But here the world met us just like in a grotesque fair.

With lottery stall, ghost train and other fantastic items, it was more dedicated to fun than to the truth. For example, in Goethe's house, a cot was placed in the water — a book, tomatoes etc. were also placed in the water. Goethe had an eventful life. After receiving a law degree from Straßburg,

Goethe came to practice in the supreme court in Wetzlar, established in 1495 for maintaining law and administering justice within the German nation of the Holy Roman Empire. He was a solicitor in Frankfurt. Subsequently, Goethe fell in love with the beautiful Charlotte Buff. Most of the time, Goethe would listen to Charlotte singing and watch her dancing to the piano instead of working at the court as solicitor. Goethe, however, could not marry his beloved. She was married off to a person in Hanover. Goethe was so frustrated that he was on the verge of committing suicide. This frustration led him to write a novel which sold like hot cakes. It caused tremendous effects on the younger generation generating among them a tendency to commit suicide. Later

Goethe's fiancée's house known as Lottehaus became a museum.

We were then led into an entirely different sphere, that of a girl, Margarethe. She brushes against our path on the riverbank, submerged in water, disappearing from her clothes, held in a last narrowing of the way. Here Gretchen is being portrayed in a possible modern form.

"Now Eros is ruling, which was the beginning of everything." And thus a modest green idyll, which now leads to the Gerbermühle was inviting us to stroll in Utopian groves. Also a Faust, awakened from a grand sleep, has strode across such a bend. An end is an end in a beginning: The grass in front of the Gerbermühle is the last station. "We leave this border crossing 'recycled'. The question about the better world on the other side of the river remained unanswered — also on Easter 1999.

Petra Roth, Lady Mayoreess of Frankfurt also rode in a ghost train along with the people, and said, "I wish for myself that 'Auf Eigene Faust' (pun: 'on my own') my awareness will be sharpened for Goethe, that desire occurs for his literature — and also a desire for the later events and functions with which our city is celebrating its greatest son this year."

On the riverboat named after Goethe, we enjoyed our lunch, after having walked along both banks of the river Main. Goethe was invited by Prince Carl August to come to Weimar when Goethe was 26. The Prince met Goethe at Frankfurt. We visited the house in Weimar where Goethe had resided along with his girlfriend, Goethe and his girlfriend lived together for 20 years. In front of the main entrance of Goethe's house there is a big window out of which his girlfriend would look for the arrival of Goethe. Goethe used to travel by horse-driven cart. The appointment of Goethe to the Court of Weimar was an important element in shaping the character of the city of Weimar. Goethe was appointed Minister by the State of Weimar. His salary was equivalent to DM 3000. The name of the currency during his time was Thaler. Goethe had been to Italy twice. Once he spent two years and another time six months. Goethe was captivated by Italian motifs, which was reflected in his house in Weimar. He breathed his last at the age of 82 sitting in a chair which has now become a part of the Goethe Museum. His manner of working was very peculiar. He used to stand and write at the raised writing desk. Only four chairs were placed in his study. He had a separate room to receive guests and entertain them. His own library contained nearly seven thousand books. Thirty thousand different types of artifacts now remain in this museum.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the greatest writer-thinker-turned-politician of Germany of the 18th century would continue to be remembered by Germans as long this race exists.



Office of the Project Director

Project Implementation Unit
Dhaka Urban Transport Project
Dhaka City Corporation
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আপনার পরিবেশ সুন্দর ও পরিষ্কার রাখুন
আপনার শিশুরকে টিকা দিন

Invitation for Bids (IFB) Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) Credit No 3163 BD

- The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from the International Development Association in various currencies hereinafter referred to as the IDA towards the cost of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this credit will be applied to eligible payments under contracts (G) VIEC3 for the Supply and Installation of Computers and others accessories for Project Implementation Unit, Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Dhaka City Corporation.
- The Project Director, Project Implementation Unit, Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Dhaka City Corporation, 14th Level, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka, now invites sealed bids under the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedures from eligible bidders for the supply and installation of Computers and other accessories for the project implementation unit, Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Dhaka City Corporation.
- Payments made under this contract will only be in Bangladesh Taka. Interested eligible bidders (including foreign bidders who are willing to receive payments in Bangladesh Taka) may obtain further information from and inspect the bidding documents at the office of the Project Director, Project Implementation Unit, DUTP, DCC, 14th Level, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka. Telephone: 9562732.
- A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the undersigned and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Tk 1500/- (one thousand and five hundred) in the form of Bank Draft or Pay Order from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favour of Project Director, Project Implementation Unit, Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Dhaka City Corporation, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 14th Level, Dhaka from the following offices: up to 23.01.2000.
 - Project Director, Project Implementation Unit, DUTP, DCC, 14th Level, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka.
 - DSM Consultant's office House # 115, Road # 23, Banani, Dhaka-1213.
- The provisions in the instructions to bidders and in the general conditions of contract are the provisions of the World Bank "Standard Bidding Documents: Procurement of Goods (SBD), National Competitive Bidding (Trial Edition-August 1997), issued by the World Bank Resident Mission in Bangladesh. The sample forms (except price schedules) of the SBD remain unchanged.
- Bids must be delivered to the office of the undersigned on or before 12.00 hours on 24.01.2000 and must be accompanied by a bid security of Tk 70,000/- (Seventy thousand taka) in the form of Pay Order or Bank Draft in favour of the undersigned from any schedule bank in Bangladesh.
- Bids will be opened in the presence of Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at 12.30 hour at PIU, DUTP, DCC office, Nagar Bhaban, 14th Level, Dhaka on 24.01.2000 at the office of the undersigned.

Shafiqul Islam
Project Director
PIU, DUTP, DCC

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