

BRITISH writer Nancy Mitford (1904 - 1973) said in *The Pursuit of Love*, 'Abroad is unutterably bloody and foreigners are fiends'. One may not agree with that in entirety, or could swallow it with a pinch of salt.

Oh! What the heck, believe in it, if you will. 'Foreigners fooling about in others' civil wars are a menace. They excite baseless hope of a fair, lasting peace', so said Woodrow Wyatt (1918 - 1997), the British journalist and writer. This has to be applicable in the Iraq case and by a longshot to today's topic.

British novelist Anthony Trollope (1815 - 1882) has recorded in *Orley Farm*: 'We cannot bring ourselves to believe it possible that a foreigner should in any respect be wiser than ourselves. If any such point out to us our follies, we at once claim those follies as the special evidences of our wisdom.' For long many in this country have believed to the contrary.

The Russian president Boris Yeltsin (1931 -) insisted, 'People in our country don't like it when foreigners take too active a hand in our affairs'. (See 'The View from the Kremlin' by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick) This is a universal truth.

In Dhaka, soon after nine-eleven, a local university, luring students with the tag of foreign connection, had obliterated the word 'American' from its name on its microbus with masking tape or something similar. Inside were all local people, not ostriches. It was downright treachery towards the Master, one could conclude. What morality do you expect this university to teach its students, it that cannot hold on to its name?

Another local university doing business in Bangladesh, in recruiting teachers for the posts of Professor,

Associate Professor and Assistant Professor advertised thus: 'All postgraduate degrees must be from reputable foreign universities'. Why!

This particular university is a private university under authority from the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Ministry of Education and the government of Bangladesh, and is having the Honourable President of the Bangladesh as its Chancellor. This university is neither located in the North or in the South but inside Bangladesh territory, and is recruiting Bangladeshi students at a heavy price.

It should not impose a requirement that is not required at any other reputable Bangladesh university because the said requirement (a) undermines the quality of postgraduate education in Bangladesh, which is unfair and unnecessary, and beyond its authority, (b) places Bangladesh below other SAARC, Asian and African countries, as they are all 'foreign', again without any authority, (c) suggests that local educa-

Desi maal in phoren bottle, yuck!

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tion is inferior and thereby is self-defeating for this local university, (d) contradicts with UGC uniformity of university employment and (e) contradicts with reputable foreign universities which has been accepting since long undergraduate and postgraduate degrees offered by other local universities.

It is most unfortunate that a university operating in Bangladesh with fund from Bangladeshi students on Bangladeshi soil under rules of the Bangladesh government should have the audacity to propose employing teachers with only foreign degrees.

Then there was this 18-year old American visiting Bangladesh to

raise awareness about diabetes. The media photo showed a very senior doctor listening to her giving a lecture from a high table. God knows how many more doctors were among the audience? What could the lady tell that the very reputable doctors did not already know? If it was about raising awareness among the mass, would not a local celebrity, a Bangali actor or an actress, a Bangladeshi cricketer or sportswoman, or a singer, have done a more meaningful job? But then she is American. When will we ever learn?

Yet another local academy is publicising in leaflets 'First time in Bangladesh..., Taught by American Scholars' and that 'All our faculties are American scholars'. How much poorer can we get? How much lower shall we be dragged down by our so-called intelligentsia? Is this the meaning of educated sinner or as they say in *Bangla gyan-paapi*?

For one, being taught by American Scholars for the first time in Bangladesh is not true. Big deal if all the teachers are American Scholars. In their statements there is a tendency to tempt students, a philosophy more apt for a commercial enterprise, which perhaps they are, than the nobility of an educational institution.

While much is being said about the mushrooming of universities in this country, knocking around the half-century mark in number, most undertaken only as a business venture, many are housed in single buildings, they have no campus as is mandatory, most have no acceptable number of full-time teachers, almost all are without proper lab facilities, most depend on the services of part-time teachers, many of who are not teachers elsewhere, and almost all stink of trade and commerce.

It may not have dawned on them that people in Bangladesh as a whole have always resented too much of foreign involvement or interference, socially and politically. And that is right! Let us try to groom local scholars, let us train them to excel their talent, let us pride in our resources, let us be self-sufficient, let us stop licking.