Nazmuzzaman interrupted, 'Don't forget the quality of school education at that period! Those teachers have gone, and so have their teaching!'

I said, 'Each of them was an institution by himself or herself...'

'Exactly true', said Borhan sir. 'But nevertheless, I do not lose hope. I am impressed by today's youth. You know why? They do a lot of extra things besides studies. We couldn't, 'coz we didn't have the opportunities. Now these boys and girls are engulfed by so many engagements...and I appreciate that they maintain their academic lives successfully. I remember myself at that age. I just used to study whole day, that's it. No other business!'

Shoaib bhai added, 'We see now students activating themselves in multifaceted activities...drama, debates, music, fashion, journalism and what not! So to put it on the other way round, today's young people have ensured financial solvency as well which is making them self-confident.'

'Not only that, by engaging themselves in such activities professionally, they have created solid platforms for these activities. So what has happened is: creative acts like music, drama, fashion, art, designing, debates etc. have gained professional acceptability in society. This was unthinkable even two decades before. To me, it is a sweet progress,' Nazmuzzaman maintained.

Shoaib bhai enthusiastically added, 'Today's competitive market has got lot to do with it. A girl or a boy of this era knows, if s/he is to survive, s/he must know a wee bit of extra issues besides her/his classroom. Therefore, today's youths are professionally more qualified and flexible. Don't you feel it's a great sign for our society?'

Finishing his tea, Borhan sir said, 'Twenty years ago I was a student of LL.M. We never imagined in our wildest of dreams that we could do anything outside other than tuition-job to earn money, Today, I don't find full attendance in any of my LL.M. classes. Students are caught up with so many jobs that they cannot afford attending classes regularly. But at the same time, their results aren't being hampered.'

At this point, Borhan sir highlighted a significant fact. Emphatically he threw a query for all of us, 'Does anyone remember when DU was closed sine die for the last time?'

'I know how true it is!' supported Nayan.

Borhan sir continued, 'Let me tell you the simple reason. Economy. There's no doubt about it that ours is a much developed economy now. This "much developed economy" has involuntarily enhanced students' professional busyness. They have wider avenues open in front of them. Very justifiably, they have been exploring those.'

Shoaib bhai sounded definite, 'Right. So when someone sings the tune regarding today's students "less attentiveness", at least I wouldn't play the drums with it.'

At this point, Borhan sir highlighted a significant fact. Emphatically he threw a query for all of us, 'Does anyone remember when DU was closed sine die for the last time?'

Well, none of us could recollect. And so he went on, 'In fact, I don't either. That culture has stopped. Do you hear any more gunshots in the campus? What you hear is an occasional *maramari* with *lathis*...and that too for a little period of time. A mere *hatahati* in DU campus now becomes "news" in the papers. The winds of change have been blowing toward betterment day by day. There IS improvement. There IS hope!'

Finishing the *chawmchoms*, Nayan was about to clutch the remainder of *payesh* and *shemai* from the trolley. He had to refrain from this heinous (!) act when Shoaib bhai screamingly reminded him, 'Nayan, we are talking of young people's attaining extra knowledge and extra wisdom, not extra fat!'

Well, this free-flowing *adda* had to stop. Night had started losing its youth by thenignoring the exuberance of the environment. 'The man named "Time" should have got used to extra-curricular activities and stay busy elsewhere,' I said to myself, 'Why wouldn't he allow us some more chatting!'

We came out and met the rain. 'The smell of the wet soil is an inexorable mark of God's artistry,' Nazmuzzaman whispered. I recalled a classic Rabindrasangeet that Kishore Kumar rendered best, '*Shawghono gawhono raatri, jhorichhe srabono dhara/Awndho bibhabori, shongo porosho hara...*' Honestly, rain-at-night has always been an intriguing incident for me...

'*Achha*, why is that *adda* still memorable after so many days?' I asked Nazmuzzaman that day.

'If I say, Borhan sir and *bhabi*'s cute hospitality made all the difference,' he said with an impish glare, 'will I be wrong?'

(The writer is an Assistant Professor of English & Communication Skills at AIUB, Dhaka.)

Quiz Answer







