Krishnochura in Baily Road

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BANGLADESHIS gained their independence after nine months war and thousands of deaths. We learnt many things about our Liberation War such as the mental state of students and about the situation after gaining independence. But, few of us truly understand how the student life was then. It was not more difficult than now, but it was different. Today, we face a lot of competition. Then, students enjoyed their lives. There were no hall politics. It was very peaceful. The population of the country was less than 70 million an now it is 150 million.

A few days ago, I met one of my cousins, who is much older than me and unlike me, experienced the Liberation War as a University student. Before the independence of Bangladesh the whole East Pakistan was under one Board called The East Pakistan Board, and getting first division in Intermediate (H.S.C exam) from that board was not easy. Only six people got the first division in her time--four students from Eden College and two from Holy Cross. My cousin was one of these students who passed from Holy Cross. Now, we have six boards and getting a first class doesn't matter at all because the total number and the percentage is the main factor. In fact the old system no longer exists, with GPA becoming the main factor.

After passing the H.S.C exam she was thinking about which universities she wanted to apply to. All the students who got Second Division were getting admission in the Medical College. All the First Division holders got admission in Dhaka University. She decided to get into the Physics Department and came with her father, to the department. During then, most parents did not permit their daughters to continue their studies and wanted them to get married instead. The Chairman of the Physics Department asked her father just one question, "Do you plan to give your daughter in marriage?" As her father's answer was a no, she got the permission to get admitted and no admission test was required. She started her studies as a University student, got a seat in Rokeya Hall during a time when there were no hall politics. The whole university life was interesting. She enjoyed it very much. Whenever she got the chance, she went out with her friends in a rickshaw. The rent was only about 10 taka for the whole day. One of her most favourite places to visit was Baily Road. There were many trees in Baily Road and most of them were the Krishnochura trees and in May, they were full of Krishnochura flowers. The landscape looked amazing in the evenings. My cousin and her friends hired a rickshaw only to see the flowers.



After completing her studies, my cousin married a professor of the Soil Science (present Department of Soil, Water & Environment), Md. Fazlur Rahman Khan. He was a nice man and very friendly with his students. On the 14th of December 1971, along with other intellectual and glorious sons of our country, he was killed by the Pakistani military and the Rajakars. After first shooting him they thought he was dead and they walked away. He called his servant for help. But, the killers came back and made sure he was really dead this time. Today, the Seminar Library of the Department of Soil, Water and Environment is named after him. A big photo of him is hung there. I feel proud to be his brother-in-law.

It seems that things have changed drastically. Our population has increased, competition in educational institutes and in job market has increased, daily costs of hiring rickshaws among other things have climbed and life, in general, is harder. We are cutting our Krishnochura trees to make high-rise buildings and destroying our environment and the landscape my cousin once enjoyed during the evenings. Baily Road is now full of fast-food joints, and Krishnochuras are only a sad memory in Baily Road. The University halls are full of politics and to get a seat in hall means you have to follow certain leaders. And most of all we are following western cultures and forgetting our roots, our history of gaining a wonderful country and mother language Bangla.

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