Debate and self-enhancement

If you want to change the world, you have to start by changing yourself. Not my words; in fact this has been time and again repeated over the ages by uncountable men of merit. The Vice Chancellor of AIUB Dr. Carmen Z Lamagna rightly underscored this "change" for the younger community.

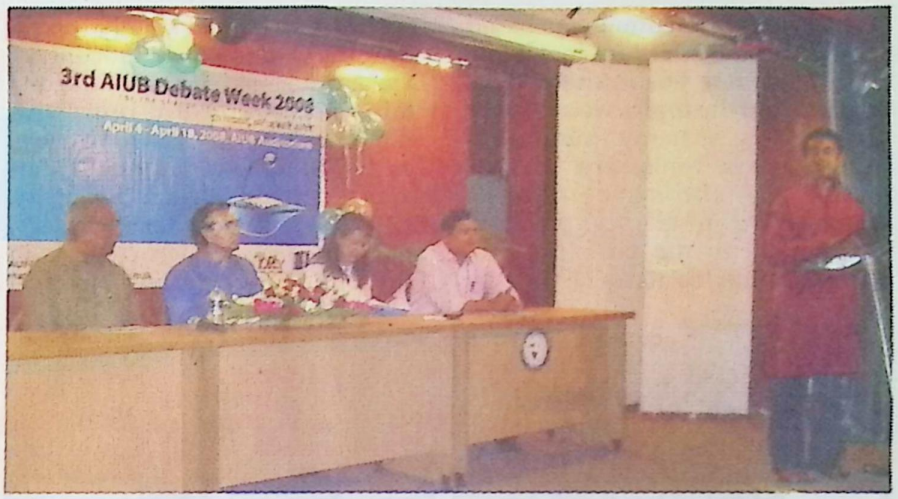
Narrating AIUB's vision of creating leaders for the Bangladeshi society, Dr. Lamagna wondered how this change would come if all weren't ready to rediscover own potentials and redefine the identities inside their personalities. In her brief eloquent speech, she stressed that a fruitful debating culture would perform this difficult act.

In his address as the Chief Guest of the finals, the Editor of The Daily Star Mr. Mahfuz Anam echoed similar sentiments and told how he himself had been shaped and reshaped by the practice of debating. Being a prolific debater of the 60's in Dhaka University, Mr. Anam definitely knows the value of debate behind his successful establishment, nationally and internationally alike, in journalistic career. He shared his personal benefits with the audience just to make them conscious about the fact: debate is NOT just a battle of some aggressive sentences; it is a spirit of rediscovering oneself intellectually.

And definitely the AIUB authority has been putting highest emphasis on promoting the debating culture not only inside the campus but also among the wider community. The overwhelming participation of school-college students in the workshop and university students in the competition, and more importantly, more than 30 neutral knowledgeable judges throughout the competition are a strong indicator of this.

The debate workshop: you acquire it, or never do it!

Personally, I have come across lots of people who are vaguely opinionated about debating. Much as it may sound queer, the general perception goes as such: Both teams get a topic, they get some time to prepare what to talk on it, they collect some relevant



data, and then start point-after-point argument, almost in the SSC-HSC English essay manner. Therefore, anyone 'who can talk well' is a 'good' debater!

Interestingly, I myself have been subject to such oddity since long till I watched the first SAARC Parliamentary Debate competition on BTV long ago. That was when I started taking real enjoyment in watching debates as I learned, debating is not just speaking wonderfully. It is an art where you need to understand the parameters of the issues you are talking about, and to know when to say what.

It was thus a dire need of the situation that apart from the debate contest, AIUB Debate Week had this debate workshop for aspiring debaters from schools and colleges.

What happened in the workshop? Well, prominent debaters at the national level conducted sessions for the young talents from different schools and colleges with invaluable inputs on debating techniques. Country's debate gurus like Dr. Abdun Noor Tushar, Mr. Shamim Reza, Mr. Hasan Mahmud Babu, Mr. Tony Michael Gomez, Mr. Chowdhury Abdullah Quaseed, Mr. Zeeshan Kingshuk Haq imparted on the participants the basic tenets of debating culture from real life situations. AOC members Abdullah Ahmed Chowdhury, Mosaddek Hossain, Sanveer Hossain and Sakib bin Kamal also joined their seniors to train up the youngsters.

Bidit told me later, 'Our target was not just creating the debating awareness among the kids; we aimed at a wider aspect. I've come up from Notre Dame College debating culture to flourish as a national debater later on, and I've felt, when a debater at the university level has already earned some repute owing to his/her school-college backgrounds, he/she is hardly in a position to learn any new thing. Therefore, school and college life is the best stage to train up debaters for future.'

AOC members have felt that as well. 'We ourselves have been on the learning process and this workshop helped all of us, to put it straight,' said one of the AOC members.

The participating institutions, alphabetically, were: Dhaka Commerce College, Dhaka Residential Model College, Dhanmondi Tutorial, European Standard School, Ideal Commerce College, Maple Leaf School, Mastermind, Notre Dame College, Oxford International School, Rajuk Uttara Model College, Rifels Public School and College, Scholastica, St. Joseph's College, Sunny Dale, and Universal Tutorial.

The power-play with words

The attraction for the general students was the battle of words among thoughtful minds which took place in five stages: first round, second round, quarter final, semi final and the final.