A Second Reflection on Star Campus *Adda*

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IT was an evening worth recounting a second time. So here I am. Students from universities in and around Dhaka gathered in The Daily Star Conference Room along with the SC editor, our jolly Shahnoor Bhai. We were waiting for the guest of the adda, Prof Syed Munir Khasru, though this waiting was not boring at all. Shahnoor Bhai initiated a roll of laughter when he asked us to share what we saw on our way and Shamma told us about a moyena which called her, "Ai meye!" Hardly had we concluded our speculation about the moneya's gender when Prof Khasru, a suave gentleman, arrived.

Shahnoor Bhai introduced Prof Khasru and not long after Prof Khasru was leading the adda. Now if you are thinking this was another of those meetings where didactic elders hurl advices at youngsters, then you are mistaken. It was more of an open ended, humour mixed bantering about Bangladesh, about our politics, and most importantly ourselves. Yes, self that is what Prof Khasru pinpointed as the root of everything. While some said lack of foresight is holding us back, others said ostrich mentality is holding us back, while some said cynicism and superstition is holding us back, again somebody spoke about how the popular attraction of prefixes like eco-, bio-, vit- and geo is holding us back. Prof Khasru stood by one point: self-deception. In his opinion, being untruthful to ourselves is holding us back.

A little later Prof Asrar Choudhury and Prof Shaheen Kabir joined the adda. According to Prof Kabir, lack of education was holding us back which, by the way, was not agreed to by Prof Khasru. For my part, my understanding was similar to Mr Munir's view, that is to say, it is not the system but the people inside the system who need to change. I always felt that literacy wasn't everything. And so I mentioned how many people spit on the street, from cars and windows day in, day out. As the zealous educationist amongst us thought spiting was too facile a thing to talk about, Shahnoor Bhai found it interestingly alliterative.

Well, we just didn't wallow in pointing out errors, we also talked about remedies. The kind of leader that the country needs; what if there was a unique voting option like 'none of the above candidates' in the national election; and how to get rid of intellectual corruption which is topping financial corruption in the country. Like in a circle, whatever the remedy was Prof Khasru always led us logically to one point: Self.

I am very grateful to Prof Khasru for clarifying the meaning of leadership for us. In fact, at that point when he was defining leadership in personal terms and the others were interpreting it in larger grounds, I couldn't help but share one of my habits with the participants. I told them of a special pocket in my bag where I store every throwaways when I am on road, like chocolate wrappers, tissue paper and even peels of fruits. I related an incident where a man after seeing me neatly place a banana peel inside my bag, quickly moved away with a scared expression on his face. But then, on the positive side, my chauffeur and my younger brother have started following me. I might not be leading millions, but two is not bad either.

As the adda proceeded it became clear that most often we have grand ideas of leadership (loudspeakers, thousands of supporters on a field, you know) but whatever becomes big, starts from small and this is what we learnt that evening.

Personalized approach to leadership, leading by example, making small changes, being honest to ourselves regardless of what the system is, these are just some of the often overlooked, plain truths that we came face to face with, on talking to Prof Munir Khasru.

As some sipped tea and others soft drinks the banter came to a close leaving us in anticipation of another SC adda.

