

# Varsity affairs.

18 MAR 1989

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## A national concern

Universities are the highest centres of education in a country. They are the nerve-centres of research and education, the meeting place of intellectuals and academic gossip. Unfortunately if we turn our eyes to our seats of higher education particularly to DU we get an entirely different picture of this premier university of the country.

Dhaka University, the Oxford of the East set up in 1921 with 877 students and

Teachers assert that there were no major grouping among the DU teachers from the birth of the university till the liberation of the country. Generally speaking they were a progressive nationalist community united on the question of country's sovereignty and university autonomy. The ideological differences between the teachers began to surface during the early 70's which led to the split of this community into two groups following the

At the masters level it is varying from 1 1/2 - 2 years.

This session jam has caused problems for both the parents and students alike. A number of parents particularly from the rural areas sell whatever they have to educate their sons. Such unnecessary unanticipated delay causes problems for them. For many a parent with marriagable daughters studying at DU, life is a great mental tension. By the time their daughters finish their education

Seat constraints and shortage of facilities has forced the students to seek patronage of the political parties in spite of the fact that they are not politically motivated. This leads to clashes, killings and closure of the university.

The entire nation is concerned about things at DU. It cannot go on as it is. After a very successful DUCSU Election there is a demand from a group of students at the campus for the resignation of the VC. Unless we can straighten things at DU it will be wrong to expect that things will improve. Firstly we have to look at certain provisions of the University Ordinance of 73 which has complicated matters at DU and change them so that the teachers are less politically involved and more serious at their job.

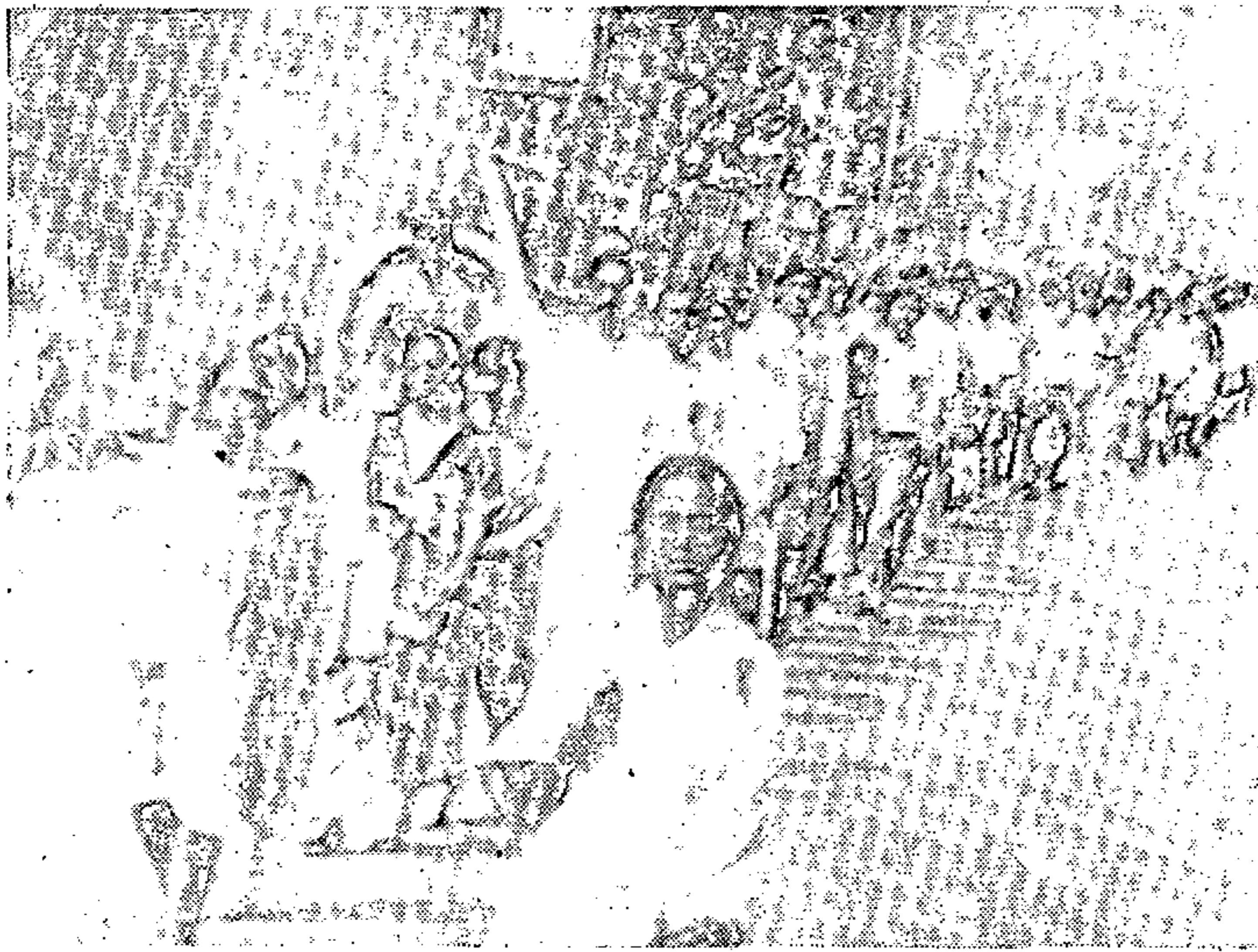
We have to see whether higher education should be made selective or not as the employment market has become saturated and also because we are not in a position to increase facilities for the students. Can we afford to spend Tk 12,055 annually on a student who remains unemployed? When doctors and engineers are queuing for a job at the bank opening new departments or increasing seats is no solution. We have to analyse the needs of the country and see what is the best for the students.

The university if it is to maintain its academic excellence should be responsible for masters, doctoral and post doctoral research only while the 203 affiliating colleges can carry on with the graduation courses.

University teachers should be motivated to go for scholarly research and publication by making it obligatory for a teacher to have publications to qualify for promotion. They should be debarred from taking consultancy or other jobs. Their salary structure should be upgraded as in the western countries and they should be given all sorts of logistic support for their work including new books, journals and appliances. Efforts should be made to generate funds for research from different sources.

Session jam should be streamlined by cancelling all holidays and holding classes on a regular basis. This will be possible only if the students, guardians, parents and teachers all join hands together. Students will do politics. In the past we have seen the students of DU giving lead in the Language Movement of 1952 and movement against discrimination and repression of Ayub's regime in 1969. We have seen the students leaders chalking out their programmes independently without support from political parties. We want the same kind of constructive politics from the students. Politics of arms and killings has to be stopped. We want the student leaders to be excellent students as in the yester years and the halls the nerve centres of literary and academic activities. We do not want the student leaders to be the pawns of major political parties.

The syllabus of DU in most departments has to be changed to suit the present day needs and provisions made for increasing residential books and other facilities of the students. We have to upgrade the teachers salary structure and give them everything to help them in their task. In that way we may be able to restore the lost glory of this Oxford of the East and save the life and career of many students from total ruination.



Such processions by students are very common at DU campus.

60 teachers on its roll is no longer what it used to be. Ganging of arms, clicking of pistols, bursting of crackers, killing of students, frequent strikes and unscheduled closure have absolutely tarnished the image of this alma mater which was famed for its academic excellence and high quality of education.

Not a single academic session passes peacefully without unscheduled closure. In the last academic session (87-88) classes were not held for 76 days. The picture was no better the year earlier. But why?

Values have undergone a radical change with the passage of time. The students of the present day are more interested in getting their certificates rather than in acquiring knowledge. They know with this certificate there is very little that they can do or get. Today, it is money and not education which is the yardstick by which a person is measured and held in estimation, as a result the students are hankering after it.

The teachers too are not what they used to be. They are more interested in group politics and other parttime jobs rather than teaching. The University Ordinance of 1973 has forced many teachers to indulge in group politics.

According to Section 20 (K) of the University Ordinance of 1973, 35 representatives of teachers of the university are to be elected in a special meeting of the university teachers as representatives to the Senate. In the Academic Council under Section 26 (M) of the same Ordinance three Associate Professors and three teachers other than professors, Heads of the Departments and Associate Professors are to be elected by the teachers themselves. These elections of teachers to the different administrative bodies of the DU has led to political groupings at the campus. Whether one likes it or not for one's own survival one joins the pink, blue or white panel of the teachers at the campus.

political changeover in 1975. This grouping reached its peak during Zia regime acquiring their distinct identity as pink and blue.

Today at DU at times the administration also gets involved in the lobbying which is not a clean process. This leads to malpractices, dirty politics, misuse of power against the teacher's group and so on making it next to impossible for a person to remain neutral. Even the Vice-Chancellors are not above groupings. Prof Fazlul Halim Chowdhury and Prof M. Shamsul Huq were from the blue lobby while the present VC, Prof A. Mannan is from the pink lobby.

With the emergence of white panel before the last October Senate election things took a different turn. In this election, the blue got 22 out of 35 seats, the pink only 2 and the white panel 11 seats. In this election for the first time we saw one group attacking the other group by means of signed and unsigned leaflets using language akin to that used by the slum dwellers.

Since it is impossible for an individual to get elected to the post of a VC, Pro-VC or Deans without support of the party grouping has flourished among the teachers which has polluted the academic atmosphere of DU.

The students themselves are politically motivated and at times get help from their teachers too. As a result clashes at the campus on this or that pretext is very common making the life of 24,255 students of DU a "living hell."

Now-a-days those who enter the threshold of this alma mater don't know when their course shall end as most sessions are lagging behind. At the Faculty of Science and Biological Science it is behind by 2/3 years and at the Faculties of Arts, Social Science, Law and Commerce by two years (at the degree level). At the Preliminary Masters level there is a backlog of 2 years at all the faculties.

their age increases and they become undesirable in the marriage market. Moreover many students themselves cross the age to qualify for a govt job by the time they come out of DU.

This presence of 2-3 batches in every class is creating pressure on the existing facilities at this university. The 15 halls (including the Foreign Students Hostel) can provide residential facilities to only 55% of the students. The remaining 45% have to fend for themselves by either "doubling" or trebling with their friends at the halls or by illegally occupying the rooms and converting them to "gonorooms". The 5 lakh books (including reference and rare books) are in no way sufficient for 24,225 students 1020 teachers of 10 Faculties. 36 departments, 7 institutes and students of 203 affiliating colleges who come to use its library from time to time.

As the teachers are politically motivated or busy with other parttime or consultancy work the research aspect of this university has suffered badly. From 1921 till today, only 90 books have rolled out of DU press with 60 being published after the liberation i.e. on average not even three books a year and half of them are PHD theses. In 1987-88 session only 9 persons received PHD degrees. Moreover there are a good number of teachers at the campus who have come here through backdoor without the requisite qualification.

The system of appointment of rotating Chairmanship of a department by the VC for a period of three years on the basis of seniority is also creating problems at DU. Often senior teacher find it difficult to work under a junior teacher or with a chairman belonging to a different political panel. Moreover it has been seen that a person starts a work but after his tenure is over a new person takes over and everything he did is forgotten and started afresh.