

Women's Studies Department In DU

A silent movement towards new learning-horizon in the country

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WHETHER its about the creation of the world or about the commencement of the civilization, the above lines of Nazrul has always proved true. Though gradually the world turned into patriarchal society in most extent and thereby women became the victims of all sorts of oppression, repression and discrimination by the male chauvinist society. At present what we see is that the performance and contributions of women are beyond of not only evaluation but also realization. It's easy to understand that when the thing is not realized at first then there is no chance to evaluate that. However these caused extreme discrimination against women from time to time because people often forget that women are the half of the total population and if this half is left out from any step or program, that step or program would never be successful. But this can't go long. This is why people from different phases have tried to take initiative to stop these male practices and to ensure women's rights and to recognize their contributions. Before everything, theoretical knowledge is so essential to take the right measure at the right time in the right track. Here is the emergence of Women's Studies Department at Dhaka University that has started a journey towards new learning-horizon in the country's higher educational institute. This is first time in Bangladesh that a self-sufficient and self-dependant department has been started at the university level to provide knowledge regarding women's issue both from theoretical and practical perspective. Interesting is that in spite of having crossed three years of its span, most of the people assume that this department is only for the females. The fact is just opposite as maximum of its students are male. Yes, dear readers, it's surprising as well as true.

However, why people guess such, what is the background of the emergence of this department, what are the subjects taught here and who are the teachers, what the students are thinking, what the present Chairperson says, what are its future plan... and such other enquires have been made to fill the thirst of curiosity of the readers regarding Women's Studies department. Lets proceed to know.

Beginning stage: hard conditions, but the journey did not stop.

Women Development courses (regarding the position of women

in the society, state and so on) have been teaching by the relevant teachers in the department of Public Administration, International Relation, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science of Dhaka University since last fifteen years. Real women development requires the theoretical concept at first before the practical or field level experience. The teachers expert and experienced in women development area felt this truth and thus made a proposal to the authority in 1997. It was raised in the academic council in 30 March 1998 but did not pass. At last, due to the sincere and cordial initiatives of some teachers, the proposal was passed on 9 March 2000 with a list of tough conditions. A

the responsibility of Chairperson for the next three years. Thus the department has got recognition through formal setup. Now it requires space, but it won't get any space according to the condition. As a result, the senior most Professor of Political Science Department who was one of the Advisers of the 1st Caretaker Govt. of the country and the founder Chairperson of the newly established department Dr. Nazma Chowdhury started to continue the responsibilities of this new department from her own office room of Political Science department. Another senior most Professor of Public Administration, Dr. Nazmunnesa Mahtab with the association of other teachers ren-

Arts building eastern part. Here is the position of the WS department at Dhaka University. Already the MSS 2nd batch has finished their exam and now waiting for the result. There were only 4 female students among the 14 examinees in the second batch too. The department deserves special appreciation for a classic step and that is there is a chance to obtain the MSS degree for the second time. In that case, the previous MSS degree holder student must have two years service experience. Due to this provision, many students have got a chance to get a second MSS degree from DU. It was found that, among the 4 girl students of 2nd MSS batch, 3 were service holders in different GO, NGO and international organization who obtained their first MSS degree from other disciplines of this university. They expressed gratitude and thanks to the authority for providing such a great chance.

The teachers took the wise decision for conducting course only in MSS as there were shortage of teachers and some other logistic supports. The first MSS batch was admitted through the formal process as is maintained in other departments. This batch consisted of 17 students where the female students were only one third of the total students. Its really surprising for all that maximum students of Women's Studies (WS) department are boys.

few of the conditions can be mentioned here for the better understanding of valued readers, as it seems that these were just like the 'powerless authority', for example:

- No financial help from Dhaka University will be given to this department
- No teachers/staffs will be recruited for this department
- No space will be given for departmental office
- No space will be provided for classroom

At that day the agreement was signed by three devoted, experienced and respected teachers of three departments of this university in spite of such stiff condition. Those courageous great teachers were- Dr. Nazma Chowdhury from Political Science, Dr. Nazmunnesa Mahtab from Public Administration and Dr. Sadeka Halim from Sociology. For the sake of the establishment of a new department and thereby to make a dream true, they took the risk. Some other teachers also extended their hands of cooperation. On April, Dr. Nazma Chowdhury was nominated to carry on

dered her active cooperation to the Chairperson to continue the flow of its activities. The entire process became a matter of surprise to all and a challenge to the involved teachers as it was just to appear the battlefield without any armaments.

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The scenario after three years.....

At present it seems the WS department after three years of its starting appreciates as well as congratulates the three years back WS saying - your journey has not gone failure, you are on the way of success.

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The papers, taught in this department, are closely related with WOMEN and their entire lives. The mentionable papers that are taught in the hon's. course are Women and Environment, Women and Society, Women and Politics and so on. In the MSS course, the papers are Introduction of Women's Studies, Women in Politics and Govt., Feminism, Research Methodology.

The students of this department are really aware and responsive to the socio-political aspects of the country and also committed to play their roles on the basis of their knowledge gathered from this department.

(More Tomorrow)

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