

In Retrospect

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Life is so full of surprises. I have been offered the Principalship of the College: I have been asked to think it over for forty-eight hours. That was not necessary: one hour was more than enough: I was not cut out for a job of this type.

1963-1964

This time the pressure is great.....it is a long story. After talking to almost all the senior members of the teaching staff, I recommended the name of Dr.B.M. Bhatia to the authorities.

1964-1976

The rest is recent history. The College has certainly progressed during this period. Dr. B.M. Bhatia is not a modest man: he has much to be immodest about - One would still like to say him: "Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth: a stranger, and not thine own lips".

I retire in April 1976, after completing the age of 65. But the innings is still not ended: the University Grants Commission gives me an award, till the age of 68, under the scheme, 'utilization of the services of outstanding retired teachers'.

17th April, 1979

Mr. Prime Minister, please raise the curtain again: don't you hear the applause: they are bidding me farewell.

Sir, you must be dreaming. It is true that we had called a meeting to bid you farewell. But very few turned up, and so we cancelled the meeting.

In summer we pine for winter: in winter, we pine for summer. The seasons pay no heed to us. To everything there is a season. There was the time to speak. Now, there is the time to keep silence. Silence is better than unmeaning words in the book of life: every page has two sides, the one written by man, the other written by Fate.

Daya Krishna*

1938 to 1945 — those were the years when I was a student in Hindu College and they are the years of my "living memory" in which alone the past lives in the present. As one turns the pages backwards, one feels the fragrances slowly stealing over one's being, fresh from the flowers that were pressed and preserved in one's youthful past. And, like Proust, one is immersed in memories, long forgotten and still a part of one's innermost self.

Yes, those were the years of the Second World War, the Quit India Movement, the Subhash Bose episode and amidst it all, the quiet environs of the old Kashmere Gate where the two colleges, Hindu and St. Stephen's, faced each other like friendly rivals, with the church looking benignly over them, and the Nicholson Park and the Qudsia gardens just behind the old gate. The Yamuna river was not far off and the playing fields of the College along the Bela road and the bank of the Boat Club were situated near the river bank for those who loved to row and go across to the other side to steal melons that were grown in the sand near the river.

The setting is necessary to understand the student world of those days when the life of learning was centered in the College and when everyone assumed that teaching makes man think and students learn. How else can one ever understand that with only three teachers in Philosophy in the College we learnt what students today do not even learn with dozen of professors around them in each department of the University. To be taught by persons like Dr. Indra Sen, Dr. S. K. Saxena and Prof. Prem Chand was the privilege of a lifetime or was a living experience and we looked forward to their classes, wondering what new portions would unfold that day. We talked about the things we learned to other students and some of them started attending our classes regularly, even though they were formerly enrolled in other subjects.

*Student in Hindu College, 1938-45

They were the teachers with whom we had the longest and the most intimate contact as they taught Philosophy. But there were others who taught us at the Intermediate level and the two years of our B. A. and the two years of our M.A. course. Many did not teach us but we knew them well and they knew us too. Amongst them, Dr. B. N. Ganguli in Economics, Dr Hari Dutta Sharma in Sanskrit, Dr. S. L. Popli in History, Dr B. R. Seth in Mathematics and Dr. N. V. Thadani in English, remain deep in our memory. The latter was also the Principal of the College who governed it with a strict kindness that ensured both freedom and discipline on the campus and the playfield.

To be in College in those days was to be in the midst of activity all the year round. There was the Parliament, the Literary Union, the Departmental Association and the College magazine, the quarterly examination, the annual All-India debates, the Kavi Sammelans, the Mushairas, the work from the national leaders, the festivities, the Fancy Dress show and the Annual Cricket Final between the old rivals, Hindu College and St. Stephen's. There was a constant on-going dialogue between some of brightest students from different disciplines and they had the active support and encouragement from the faculty in all subjects. To name but a few, we had Girilal Jain and Sita Ram Goel from History; Raj Krishna and Ram Swarup from Economics; J. N. Kapoor from Mathematics; Madan Mohan Mathur, J. P. Guha and K. K. Kaul from English; and Vivek Dutta in Philosophy. Besides this, there was L. C. Jain, Som Benegal, Brij Mohan Toofan and amongst the younger contemporaries, Kapila Mullick, now Kapila Vatsyayan.

Was it all too serious? No fun, no pranks? Of course there were in plenty. Who can imagine someone coming dressed as a Naga Sadhu in a Fancy Dress show? Yet, Brij Mohan Toofan did and when a scandalized and enraged Principal asked him to get out, he staunchly refused, saying, " Sir, I represent one of the oldest and the noblest sects of Sadhus in India". Toofan is no more, but the memory of his innumerable pranks, imaginatively conceived and boldly executed even now regale his friends when they talk about him. Or in a different vein,

who would imagine Kapila in those days going to bat as a young college girl in a friendly match with boys?

Enough of memories! But how can one allow the gates of memory to close without recalling the ever helpful Banwari who watched over each student's cycle so carefully or the eternally pan-chewing Har Govind, the book lifter in the Library, or Mithan Halwai outside the gate, the rendering of Hitler's speeches by Prof. Prem Chand who wrote the main events of those days in the pages of the College Magazine under the title "Time Marches On" or the innumerable walks along the Yamuna with friends and the interminable discussions that were held there.

Three cheers for those days and I hope every student of the College or University today will have a similar, rewarding experience.