

A Gateway Feature: University Education

In Pakistan

Khalid Aziz is a postgraduate student from Pakistan. He obtained an 'intermediate degree' in the sciences in Pakistan, and then a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan. He then came to Alberta and earned a B.Sc. in petroleum engineering, and is now doing postgraduate work in that field.

After telling me about the Urdu script, which is easy to read he says, he told me about the Pakistani system of Education, and Pakistani University life. At present, after ten of elementary and high school, one is granted an 'intermediary degree' after two years of college. After another two to five years, a B.A. or B.Sc. is granted.

The present military government has set up a commission on Education that proposes to increase pre-University schooling to twelve years, and the University training by another year or two. The language of instruction will be changed to Urdu in West Pakistan, and Bengali in East Pakistan. It is now English. By establishing compulsory education up to grade eight, in the next fifteen years it is hoped to raise the literacy rate from its present level of 20 per cent to 100 per cent. Higher pay will be offered to teachers in an effort to increase their number and quality. The school facilities are to be furnished by the communities, after which the cost of running the system will be shared equally by the community and the provincial government. Uniform standards are maintained by the federal ministry of education.

How do the standards compare

to standards in this country? On the whole, the standards are lower, but that is to be expected since there are only ten years of pre-University education. But the University standards are equal to Canadian ones. Moreover, the new system will probably raise standards in high school.

There are colleges in all large towns. Most of them are affiliated with Universities, who indirectly control standards by their entrance requirements. For technical schools, there are entrance exams; but the humanities patterns continue directly from the colleges. Entrance examinations are necessary for the technical schools because of the limited number of places available.

Presently, University education is pretty well restricted to the upper classes since the poor are hardly able to send their children to elementary school, let alone University. For this reason, the scholarship situation is not critical, although there are not enough. The compulsory education system will produce many students capable of University study from the poorer classes, none of which should be barred from higher education because of finances. There will be a great need for scholarships and bursaries. Many of the scholarships now available are foreign, and primarily for postgraduate study overseas.

What about academic freedom? Criticism of the government is impossible at present, because the whole country is under martial law. Elections will be held soon on the 'basic democracy' system; that is, every thousand people elect one person, of these, every five elect another one and so on up to the top of the pyramid. Before the coup d'etat, academic freedom was normal. It was certainly more

obvious than here, where it exists, but is not taken advantage of.

Co-education existed in many Pakistani colleges before Pakistan existed, but it amounted to hardly more than sharing the same classroom. Social in the Western sense of the word is limited to some sports, like tennis, social functions with skits, games, and classical and folk dances. Dancing is individual; the dance as an everyday form of emotional expression is more natural to the Pakistani than to the Canadian. Generally, social life is more closely tied to the family.

There are few student residences at the Universities. Most students live at home, few country or small town families can afford to send a son or daughter to University. This too will change: as more and more students must live in residence, the social life of the University is bound to be affected. Whether the students will follow the pattern of their American counterparts and turn University into a social affair remains to be seen; one surely hopes they will not.

In Egypt

Sami Ibrahim, graduate of Heliopolis University in Cairo, is at the University of Alberta, working towards his Masters degree in soil science.

Pre-University education in Egypt, he said, is much as it is in Canada, with six years of primary school, three of secondary, and three in high school. Secondary schools are divided into scientific, agricultural, and industrial schools. Students with the highest academic standings are permitted to attend the scientific schools; otherwise, they attend one of the other two. English is taught for seven years, French for three.

Egypt has four Universities: the University of Cairo and Heliopolis University, both in Cairo; one in Alexandria, and one in Assiut, in the south. Heliopolis University alone has 50,000 students. The Univer-

sities are divided into faculties of agriculture, engineering, science, arts, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary science, law, literature, and commerce. Each University is governed by a dean, with faculty deans under him.

Entrance requirements are a 60 per cent average on the final high school exams, with medicine and engineering requiring the highest entrance marks.

Ibrahim said that tuition was very expensive, amounting to \$70 a year, which is high in comparison with the prevalent standard of living. There are "not too many" scholarships, a limited number for every faculty.

Most faculties require four years of study to attain a degree, with the exception of engineering, which requires five, and medicine which requires six and one-half, two of pre-med in a general science pattern, and four and one-half years in medicine. Ibrahim, who obtained his degree in a soil sciences pattern in the Faculty of Agriculture, was required to take two years of general sciences, including physics, chemistry, and horticulture. Two specialized years followed, his courses including soil science, animal breeding, horticulture, crop production, agricultural chemistry, dairy, insects, and plant diseases. Other science students take two years of general science, followed by two years of specialized subjects in the pattern they are taking.

Ibrahim said that there is a strong emphasis on sciences, a great interest in them being taken by the government. Engineering which is vital to Egypt's growing industry, and agriculture are the most heavily stressed. The academic year at Egyptian Universities is similar to that used in the United States, with two semesters of four months each, and a two-week holiday in the middle of January.

The standards at the Universities, Ibrahim said, are not as high as they could be. Ninety percent of the staff obtain their degrees at European or American Universities. Because of the expense, there is a lack of equipment, restricting research. To obtain an M.Sc. requires three years, whereas at the U of A, only two are required. Courses, he said, are as difficult, and occasionally more so, than they are here.

Students are assured jobs upon graduating, and nearly all stay in the country once they have graduated.

Co-education exists in the Universities on the faculty level, but classes are taken separately. This separation Ibrahim attributed to tradition and religion.

When asked what comprises extra-curricular activities, Ibrahim replied that Egyptian students do not have dances, but are no more serious about their studies and activities than Canadian students. Most clubs are athletic, and there are no political clubs on any of the campi. Prior to the revolution, he said, there was a great deal of political agitation on campus, but now there are no political clubs at all. Communist groups do not exist in Universities, as they have been out-lawed by the government.

The most striking difference to him between U of A and Heliopolis University is, as Ibrahim put it: "Maybe the girls are more beautiful."

Ibrahim will spend two years at the U of A, and two more at an American University of his own choice. All four years are paid for by the Egyptian government. When he returns to Egypt, he will work in the National Research Centre.

Philsoc Real Gasser

Dr. L. E. Toombs, professor of Old Testament literature at Drew University, N.J., spoke on "Myth and Reality in the Literature of the Ancient Near East" at a joint meeting of the Humanities and Philosophical Society January 21.

Dr. Toombs stated that mythology was an ancient substitute for philosophy and science, and must be approached by way of its function in these societies and their culture. Mythology does not always show the same face. It has evolved from occult drama to the present day fairy-tale. It has now ceased to be a necessary part of the state, and has become a literary rather than a social phenomena. As a literary phenomena, the myth has become symbolically significant.

Mythology was the principle means by which ancient societies understood and exercised control over reality. In this understanding lies the intellectual element of the myth which interpreted the world to society and drew the real world into the descriptive one of mythology.

The speaker stated that it was in vain to look for consistency in myth. There is, however, a recurring pattern of thought and a describable world view containing four elements: Reality impressed ancient man as "thou" rather than an "it". Thus, the

psychological experience was taken at face value. The sky, for example, became a symbol of authority, the king and father of gods. Dr. Toombs stated that there was a definite distinction between religion and magic. Man's problem of life became the making of a delicate adjustment to the powerful wills about him and thus create reality.

Secondly, ancient man's interest in beings was not scientifically motivated. In a mystical sense, they were concerned with the "how and why." Theirs was a conceptions of a timeless quality of beginnings; in the realm and life of gods, seasons, world. The beginning of any institution was a formative or creative event, and all myths are stories of these formative beginnings.

The third element is that of time characterized by flexibility and fluidity. Thus, the past and present can exist at the same time. The formative event is always contemporary and endlessly repeated although it belongs to the past.

Lastly, the function of the myth in the society performing it is to bring the past into the present. It is not merely an intellectual experience, but a part of the ritual worship of the community.

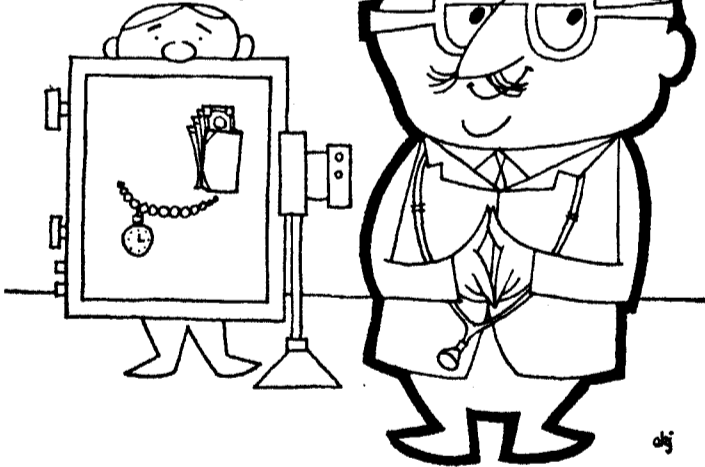
The Old Testament dismembered the myth and created a new thing of the dying and rising god. There are three acts of creation in the Old Testament: the universe, the nation, and the nation restored after destruction. The exodus event is the formative event of Israel. Although it is the beginning of the Old Testament, it is myth 'par excellence.' The Israelites transposed the formative events from the gods to the arena of human affairs.

The formative event of the New Testament was the event of Christ: His incarnation, teaching and resurrection. Generally, the new formative event means a shattering of the old orders. In conclusion, Dr. Toombs stated that "In a sense, the New Testament, destroyed the Old."

The meeting ended abruptly during the discussion period, when Dr. Collier, president, stated that there was gas escaping in the Med building. Huge clouds of yellow smoke filled the building while the crowd dispersed. Cause for alarm, however, was slight. The pungent yellow smoke was the result of a smoke-bomb set off by the artsmen during engineer's queen campaign week.

Ivan Nastikoff

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