

The News Today

My Noman Sir

By Dr Mohammad Farashuddin

Sometimes it happens that the relations between a teacher and a student emerge as what exists between a father and a son. My relations with Noman Sir were even more than that. I had been privileged to be in close touch with many illustrious teachers during my studentship right from the Primary level to the Degree level. The brightest of those stars that continue to illuminate my mental faculties is Mohammad Noman. My introduction to Professor Noman was, however, marked by a tinge of misunderstanding. It was in the late fifties when Noman Sir taught us English at M C College, one of the best seats of learning in those days. Normally a cordial, amiable and affectionate person, Noman Sir was at the same time a very firm believer in the discipline and order within the classroom. In one of the initial days of the session, a classmate sitting beside me was caught by Noman Sir for some wrongdoing, he was marked; and I was taken for an accomplice. There was an exam several months later; and a couple of days following the exams I was summoned by Noman Sir. There, with my answer script in one hand, he patted my shoulder and treated me with some very affectionate words. When, on his enquiry, I told him I didn't score the highest marks in English in my Matriculation, he was somewhat disappointed; but took some solace knowing that I got the second highest. He advised me to read The Statesman regularly. The country was then under Ayubshahi military rule; the elected Students Union was suspended and replaced by a Committee appointed by the college administration. I became Literary Secretary in the new Committee while Prof Noman acted as Adviser. It was from then on that we developed a very cordial relationship. Direct contacts with Noman Sir marked a diminishing trend when I stayed abroad for eleven years from 1984. I used to maintain regular contacts with him before that period. He became very happy when I got the chance as a teacher in the Dhaka University department of Economics, but

the balloon of his elation deflated with my decision to leave the job for joining the Civil Service. He had been hoping that I would prove a worthy Professor and that would pave the way for my literary pursuits. I wonder if my efforts to revert to teaching would bring some solace to the departed soul of this great well-wisher. Noman Sir had been a brilliant student at the English department of Dhaka University. He was resident at the West House of Salimullah Muslim Hall. Prof M A Hashim and Mir Ahmad Jamal, two of the contemporaries of Prof Noman as students, tend to get emotional when talking about him. They and other friends and contemporaries of theirs rate Mohammad Noman as an excellent person whose warmth of heart and depth of feelings had made him a dear one among all. His love for the poor and the deprived ones was outstanding. He used to say that while the knowledge from text books could make a man literally educated, a really good man is adorned by the richness of his soul. He taught us that one's love for fellow human beings helped one rise to the level of the greatest creation among all living beings. Noman Sir was not that much tall, but his smile was big. That was why his dark complexion seemed to make him more handsome. He was never known to be harsh to anyone. Yet, he had a very strong personality. His students were deeply fond of him because he used to let his heart flow with the flow of his teachings. He advocated for values; and taught us to go by idealism for just goals. I still remember him teaching us the story of Tom and George, the Ramsay brothers, and professing for winning the race the slow and steady way rather than trying to be upstarts. Eager to bring welfare to the students, Mohammad Noman joined as Lecturer for English at Dhaka University almost immediately after doing his Master's. Later he switched over to government service and joined Chittagong College in 1951, from where he shifted to Rajshahi College the following year. He was transferred to Dhaka College in 1954. From then on he served Dhaka College, save for a couple of years between 1960 and 1962 at Sylhet M C College, till his retirement from government service in 1985. Prof Noman was Principal of Dhaka College for about five years before retiring; and shouldered the big responsibility with a level of efficiency that earned him great honor and fame. His unwillingness to remain idle even during the retired life had led him to accept an

offer to hold the office of the Treasurer at Jahangirnagar University. Later he was appointed Vice Chancellor of the same University over a brief tenure. It was indeed a befitting honor to an ideal and sophisticated teacher that Professor Noman was. Principal Mohammad Noman was a man of great wisdom, an outstanding intellectual who had inexhaustible energies for hard work. He had a unique touch of friendliness in his being that invariably impressed students, colleagues and fans alike. Never have we heard anyone Balking anything bad about him. His words were rich in merit and logic. He favored faking decisions on the basis of logic; rather than on emotional bias. He had in him a strong magnetic force that made his nobleness more obvious. Mohammad Noman the educationist lived all his life in an ideal atmosphere of learning. His worthy wife had been a Professor at the College of Home Economics. I happen to know three of his brothers - all of them involved, directly or otherwise, in education- related pursuits. I also hear that two of Noman Sir's daughters are in the noble profession of teaching. That all the members of the family had been inspired to serve the nation through education is an ample proof of the greatnsss of Noman Sir, his luminous heart and his true love for the country and humankind. Noman Sir is no more with us; and we do miss him terribly. The nation would have been immensely benefited had we have, in these hard days of our national life, the valuable services of a noble man as Professor Noman was - a crusader of education combining all the superlative traits efficiency, honesty and transparency For, our progress to prosperity would be retarded, and our image in the outside world tarnished, unless we arc capable of resolving the chaotic state of our educational arena. True, Noman Sir is not present amongst us in person; but the values and ideals that he had been professing throughout his life would remain a guiding force in our journeys forward. We would be according due honors to the memory of this noble soul only if we - the students, colleagues and fans of Professor Noman - engage "ourselves in the pursuit of bringing the very best for our educational arena by deriving inspiration from the glowing examples of honesty, commitment and patriotism set forth by this great man. I pray for salvation of the departed soul of our beloved Noman Sir offer him my heartfelt respects and

register to him my allegiance unqualified. The Writer is Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank; and Former CSP