



The serene Chiromo Campus

city, the dazzle of life complicates and makes them so emotional that it will take time for them to catch up. Now given that mathematics and English were core and they used to be given in the two year period of form five/six, we now have to prepare them in the first semester, but it is not only the system of 8/4/4, there is perhaps a

Benares was that one could get a research position and still teach. What drew him to Benares however was that his supervisor, Prof. Mishra, shifted to Benares. "When he approached Mishra to supervise him for his PhD, destiny matched so much with what his father, who had studied at Benares wanted me for me. My father was very happy with me. He had been given an offer to join the philosophy department, but opted to look after family property.

Pokhariyal taught at Benares between 1968 and 1970 and was enlisted on a post doctoral research position, where he also helped junior research fellows. In 1970, he saw an advert in the "Nature magazine. "I simply applied and was offered a job in the University. I was born in a big state 'Utter Pradesh, and was supposed to join politics by consensus of the people. But my father persuaded me and the community to allow me to first earn and utilize my professional capacity. I guess if I was still in India, and given the turmoil in Utter Pradesh, I would be in jail."

Pokhariyal taught at KUC between 1974 and 1979, he started teaching at UON proper in 1976, at the time for the Faculty of Engineering, where he taught the geometry course. In 1978, he was offered a full time position at Chiromo and finally joined the UON on 1st April 1979. "When I joined the University, remuneration was okay; our students were so good that we were proud to be associated with them. I believe that the same holds today, that in any part of the world our students would do well. If we are mean enough to give them a B+, they get A+ at Harvard and Stanford. Again when I joined we had fairly good interaction with global academic institutions through external examination, staff was fairly international.

So tell me, I ask, where did the rain hit us? Frankly, a misnomer was introduced with the shift to 8/4/4. The challenge introduced is that the fresher's were not prepared mentally and academically to take up independent study. The lights in the

problem, with mathematic's standards and moral aspects of teachers globally, teachers seem to lack dedication, they have not made the effort to teach mathematics and in the spirit of taking shortcuts inculcate a spirit of hatred for the discipline. I do not see any reason why girls and boys cannot do well in math's and physics. I know that in high school, teachers tell girls that math's and physics are not for them.

The conversation is heating up, and Prof. Pokhariyal gives me what is a new thread, that training of teachers is not adequate in terms of the teaching methodology and the subject content. "Mathematics should be approached with its possible applications shown to the students, for instance, mathematics has a fantastic application in every discipline, once this is injected in every students mind, that hatred will go down. We should capture students at the catchment level at high school. At the School of Mathematics, there is an out-reach programme that goes to schools to demonstrate. One methodology for teaching that works



well is group study. Methodology should boost morale, upraise uptake, design strategy that the weakest of student's can understand and pass.

Kenya is not doing badly on the world map of maths. Prof Pokhariyal observes that our students are comparable to any other in the world. The degree of the UON is globally recognised, for instance when my son wanted to apply for a green card, they asked for his course outline in electrical engineering, and they scrutinized the outline and pronounced it globally competitive. International exposure, initiatives in teaching, seminars, conferences for enhancing PhD's and publication can also assist the University to regain its old glory. The interaction with international experts and the global community is imperative.

The tradition at the University of Nairobi is one of: identify good students; nurturing them is a tried tradition that cements relationships. This is the tradition set by the late Morris Alala, George Saitoti, etc. The

question on the tip of my tongue, what openings exist for someone who has done mathematics, is biting. "You see, says Pokhariyal, in the late 1970, Price Water house etc." became convinced that BSc mathematics graduates are trainable for economics, business, accounting, economics etc. The mathematics branch of actuarial sciences has drawn students and gets them jobs in the insurance sector. Industrial maths is designed to suit the needs of the sector with mathematics tools, while biometry is designed to train researchers in the area of biomedical and medicine research. Indeed, social statistics at master's level is for any discipline, it is essential in research and health disciplines where data is being analysed. Some of the top employees of mathematics students are Kenya Bureau of Statistics, Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, Kenya Airways and those requiring operations research specializations.

"I tell students that one of the most important aspects of maths is that anyone who wants to be an

entrepreneur and has a sharp maths education can be successful in their venture, they immediately see the consequence of numbers, margin of profit, appraisal of investment risks and probability".

Pokhariyal is married to Mohini and she has played a big role in his life. To be honest, I don't worry how my house is arranged. She arranges my clothes daily. Her management leaves me with enough time to interact between my students and colleagues. Mohini actually pushes me, she remembers my diary and allows me to work. We have two children; the elder son Shuvranshi did electrical engineering at the University of Nairobi and works for Intel. Our second son Devesh, studied aerospace engineering in Arizona, he has a master's degree in aerospace engineering, and an MBA from Thunder world. He is a fairly top manager at Rockwell Collins, the company that develops stimulators for defense and civilian use in Virginia, USA. My children are Kenyan and are fluent Kiswahili speakers and were raised as Kenyan.

Pokhariyal is very athletic, tall, at 5.11, he is not stooped. He does 45 minutes of yoga and exercises every morning. He has played soccer in high school and at university, tennis and chess.

Pokhariyal observes that if by Gods grace, he has breath to give and the University wants him to continue he will do so, mentoring, and supervising. He has cleared 5 students to graduate with PhD, next year he may have 6/7 PhD students. "I believe that if you devote all your effort to train and improve the quality of the children of the nation, then the almighty takes care of yours".