



# Sixty eight years of Dhaka University

IN the early second decade of the twentieth century, after the annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911), one of the popular demands of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal was the establishment of a University at Dhaka. A delegation consisting of Sir Nawab Salimullah, Nawab Syed Nawab ali Chowdhury, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haq waited upon the Viceroy Lord Hardinge when he was on an official visit of Dhaka in January 1912. The deputation pressed a vigorous demand for a University at Dhaka. Within a few weeks, on February 2, 1912 the British Government issued a communique stating the decision of the establishment of a University at Dhaka.

In May 1912 the Government published a resolution in regard to the proposed University of Dhaka and appointed a committee consisting of 13 members, called the Nathan Commission, to frame a scheme. The committee, after a thorough discussion recommended for a state sponsored residential University at Dhaka. When the Nathan Committee Report was published the Bengali intelligentsia expressed their views both for and against the scheme. Finally, the report was approved by the Secretary of State in December 1913. A Calcutta University Commission was appointed to recommend further valuable suggestions regarding the constitution and management the University of Dhaka.

Eventually, the Dhaka University Act, 1920 was passed by the Indian Legislative Council in March 1920. This Act offered a legal basis for the constitution of a residential University at Dhaka. On the first of December of the same year P.J. Hartog was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka for a term of five years.

The University of Dhaka formally opened its doors for the students on July 1, 1921. It inherited the estate of the Ramna area comprising 600 acres

nath Hall was temporarily housed in Bungalow No. 6 and the Muslim Hall was accommodated with the upper storey of the Old Secretariat Building which formed the Central Building of the University. F.G. Turner, Naresh Sengupta and A.F. Rahman became the provost of Dhaka, Jagannath and Muslim Halls respectively.

In the University of Dhaka classes began during the academic session of 1921-22. Faculties of Arts and Law held their classes in the Old Secretariat building and those of Science, in the Curzon Hall. The Library was situated in the Old Secretariat building. A gymnasium was also constructed for the students. Subsequently, during the period 1921-47 Dhaka University had opened two more faculties: Faculty of Agriculture and Faculty of Medicine. Many of the original departments were subdivided and 8 new departments were created. These were the Departments of Commerce, French Language, German Language, Islamic History and Culture, Economics, Bengali, Political Science and Biology. The number of teachers and students became almost double. In the field of research the University achieved great success. During this period, 57 research scholars obtained Ph.D and D.Sc. degrees. The Faculties and Departments of the University also began organising seminars and lectures. In 1925 the University of Dhaka published its first book. The Early History of Bengal, written by Ramesh Chandra Majum-

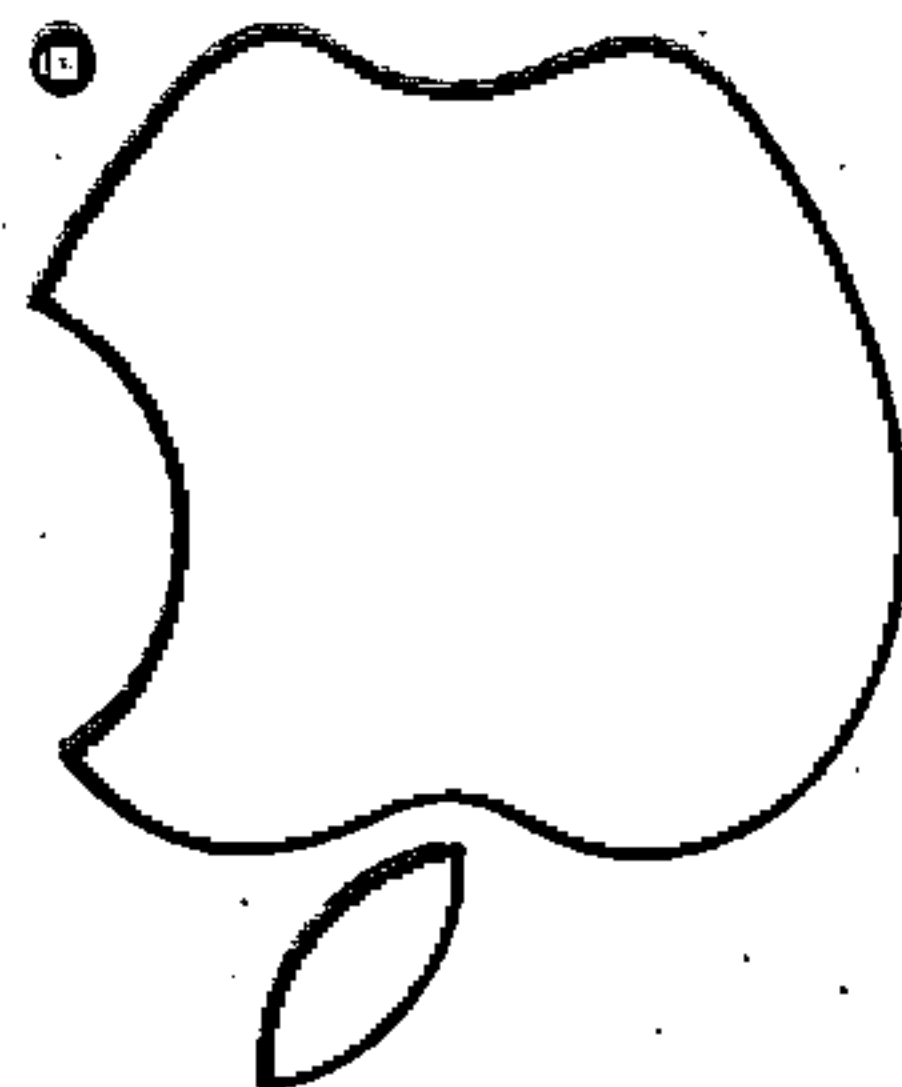
Faculty of Commerce (70-71). 16 new departments were set up during this period. These were the departments of International Relations, Psychology, Sociology, Social Welfare, Geography, Journalism, Foreign Languages, Library Science, Botany, Mathematics, Soil Science, Geology, Zoology, Applied Physics, Biochemistry and Pharmacy. Some of these departments were separated from the old departments but some of them were fully departments.

In the 1950, the University of Dhaka began to establish several Institutes and Research Centres on an experimental basis. The Institute of Education and Research was the first institute, which was followed by the Institute of Statistical Research and Training, Institute of Business Administration and Institute of Nutrition and Food Sciences. During the decade the number of students and teachers increased considerably. The University authority built a new Arts Building, Science Annexe, Administrative Building and 5 new residential Halls for the students. However, along with this success, the passage of 1961 Dhaka University Ordinance created reaction in the academic circle. The 1961 ordinance replaced the Act of 1920 and thus rejected autonomy and the democratic tradition of the University of Dhaka. This new ordinance created a suffocating atmosphere in the University.

Despite the Pakistan Government's attempt to reduce the autonomy of



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