

Role of Universities in Urban Development: A Case of Symbiotic Connection between the University of Dhaka & Dhaka City during the British Raj

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Abstract: University of Dhaka is a name that reverberates in every phase of the history of Bangladesh. Initially a boon of the colonial period, the institution came as a beacon of hope for the populace of East Bengal. The foundation of Dhaka University in 1921 brought new life to the city. It became the centre of excellence and at the same time helped to turn Dhaka into a prime urban area in East Bengal. The needs of the people engaged in administrative work, the needs of the business community and above all the residential requirements growing out of the sudden onrush of people to Dhaka contributed to the urban growth of the city. It is apparently evident that the presence of this educational institution turned Dhaka into a very prominent college town within a short time and rapid changes were taking place which eventually contributed to the urban burgeoning. Thus, the history of the university is closely linked with that of the city. Ever since its establishment, the university has been deeply embedded in the local economy, played a critical role in the coordination and support of economic activity, and has an important social connection with the local community of Dhaka. This paper aims to investigate the impact of Dhaka University on the urban development of Dhaka and the flourishing of several infrastructural changes, migration and job opportunities for the populace. The paper also aims to denote some key aspects of the symbiotic relationship between Dhaka city and the University of Dhaka.

Key Words: Colonial Era, Dhaka City, University of Dhaka, Symbiotic Connection, Urban Development, Socio-Economic Growth.

Introduction

The glorious University of Dhaka is an integral part of the history of Bangladesh, and it is a luminary name in the nation. Founded in the line of political feud during the colonial period, this educational institution drastically managed to change the fate of Dhaka to a greater extent. In different ensuing political events, this institution and the associated prominent figures have always played vital roles, such as in the Language Movement or the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Since its very inception, Dhaka University

emerged as a symbol and glimmer of aspiration for the populace of eastern Bengal. It was the first university that was established in this part of the greater Bengal presidency in the colonial period. It was intended to be a consolation prize for the people of East Bengal who were disgruntled after the revocation of the partition of Bengal in 1911. Measures were undertaken by the British government and the political leaders of East Bengal and due to their relentless efforts, finally from 1st July 1921, the university began its remarkable journey. After a glorious hundred years of the University of Dhaka, it is imperative to reflect on some of its aspects, particularly the mutually reinforcing role of the institution in the urban growth of Dhaka city.

The term urban development is a key term in this paper, and it broadly refers to the mechanisms of planning and construction that accelerate the growth and evolution of an urban zone. It is observable from many other countries that the foundation of a principal educational institution can positively affect the structure of any place. Many places all around the world have been recognized as university cities or college towns such as Oxford, Durham, Cambridge and so on. For the prosperity and development of these towns, the universities have played key roles and there is no doubt about it. The symbiotic relationship between Dhaka city and the University of Dhaka can be traced back to the colonial period. Numerous civic amenities were developed shortly after the university's establishment. It provided employment opportunities and revived the position of Dhaka as a core urban area within the Bengal Presidency. It exemplifies how influential universities can work as a catalyst for the urban development of an area.

Academic institutions help to keep economies thriving in small and medium-sized municipalities. According to the statement of Mark Muro, policy director of the Metropolitan Policy Program at research group Brookings of Washington D.C. top universities usually provide an anchor of financial and human capital that helps create a stable local economic ecosystem. As centres of research and innovation, academic institutions are well equipped to help urban residents transform from declining industries to rising ones. According to a 2016 study by Brookings research centre for the Wall

Street Journal, 16 geographic regions were analyzed and afterwards it was seen that they suffered excessive manufacturing losses yet managed to sustain strong overall job growth. Most of them happened to be major university towns, including Springfield in the state of Missouri and Athens, Georgia, United States of America. MIT professor at Sloan School of Management, John Reenen, who co-authored a report in 2016 on the economic effect of universities worldwide, stated that a "stickiness factor," is more convenient in medium-sized cities with universities. For struggling urban territories, the presence of a strong academic institution can be a lifeline and a savior. Decades ago, the economy of Lee County in Alabama suffered greatly and it resulted in the creation of a chain effect that shut businesses and profoundly affected communities. But 14,000 new jobs have been generated in the city since 2001, including a new General Electric plant. In this case, Auburn University played the role of a catalyst, which, along with attracting new investment, trained and assisted local farmers in new technology and also helped laid-off working-class people in the neighbourhood.¹

The history of the University of Manchester that originated from Owens College could be used as an example here. Initially, seven years after the foundation of Owens College, it proved to be a failure. The Founding Fathers came to understand that though the institution had been constructed in the central part of the city, it was far-flung from the city itself. They attempted to secure the interests of the citizens of Manchester and also financial aid from them. The founders did not just acquire financial assistance from the people of the city but also acquired their living urban interests and wholehearted synergy. Gradually, from humble beginnings, a great university flourished in Manchester.²

In the same way, after the revocation of the first division of Bengal Presidency, when Dhaka lost its status as the capital, the University of Dhaka proved to be one of its core urban lifelines in the colonial period. This university was always seen not merely as a university for the province, but uniquely as a university for Dhaka city, supporting the city and being supported by it.³ In fact, one of the original objectives behind

this university was to firmly establish Dhaka as the intellectual metropolis of this province and to revive the lavish material assistance for the city.⁴

Therefore, it is appreciable and a notable fact that indeed significant educational institutions and their activities can make a strong impact upon the economy and urban growth of a city. University of Dhaka made a similar impact on Dhaka in relation to the civic amenities, boosting economic growth and other urban establishments. It has also influenced municipalities in Dhaka, stimulating socio-economic development and other urban facilities. As a result, the growth of the University of Dhaka during the colonial period and the rise of Dhaka city can be co-related together. The paper will aim to highlight their co-operative relationship and the role played by their synergy in the urban and socio-economic development of Eastern Bengal. The main research objective here is to figure out the significant role of Dhaka University as a catalytic factor for the urban growth and socio-economic development of the colonial Dhaka metropolitan. The nature of the mutually symbiotic connection between the city and the university will be determined here. This paper will attempt to answer the following research question: During the British Raj, how did the foundation and continual activities of the university positively affect the infrastructural advancement and socio-economic transition of Dhaka city?

Literature Review

Numerous voluminous works have narrated the urban development of Dhaka during the British Raj. The historical path is a well-discussed matter in the existing scholarship. Scholarly works such as *DHAKA, Past Present Future* (Ahmed, 1991) and *400 Years of Capital Dhaka and Beyond* (Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2011; Hafiz & Rabbani, 2011) can be regarded as foundational literature detailing the city's urban history. While they have woven a rich tapestry of urban aspects, they do not explicitly narrate the direct contribution of the University of Dhaka to the urban development of the city. A.G. Stock's *Memoirs of Dacca University 1947-1951* (2017) is helpful as it focuses on the vigorous role of the university in the political and intellectual scenario and vividly

portrays the contemporary urban landscape of Dhaka. But it does not highlight or mention what kind of major urban modifications were taking place solely because of Dhaka University.

Chowdhury and Faruqui's "*Physical Growth of Dhaka City*" (1991) widely documented the expansion of Dhaka and explained the spatial development. "*Dhaka Under the British Crown 1858-1947 — Aspects of Urban History*" (2011, 1991), by Sharif Uddin Ahmed is crucially insightful and delves into the broader urban historical context of the colonial period. These works form the groundwork to comprehend the growth of the city at different times. Mehedi Hasan Khan's article, "*Population Growth in Dhaka City, 1610-1947*" (2011), further highlights the influx of people that catapulted urban expansion. Nazia Khanum in "*Provision of Civic Amenities in Dhaka 1921-1947*" (1991), jots down many crucial points about civic privileges, facilities, infrastructural changes and vital elements needed for the development of a metropolis. Rangalal Sen's "*Society and Social Structure in Capital Dhaka since the Mughal Period*" (2011, gives the readers a historical overview of the city's social ascension. Dhaka, as a rising political hub, has been scrutinized in M. Nazrul Islam's "*The Political Role of Dhaka 1905-1971*" (1991). The endeavors of several community groups, specifically Mohammedan organizations, in molding the urban social landscape is explored by Wakil Ahmed in "*Muslim Organizations of Dhaka c. 1879-1947*" (1991). It also emphasized their influence over the urban life of Dhaka. Sharif Uddin Ahmed's "*Municipal Politics and Urban Developments in Dhaka 1885-1915*" (1991), gives us a rich insight into how administrative and political mechanisms became catalysts for urban changes. Works within *Smriti Kothai Dhaka Bishwabidyalyay* (Jahangir, 1992), such as Aziz Ul Haque's "*Challisher Doshoker Gorar Dike Salimullah Hall*" and articles by Sirajul Haque and Muhammad Shafiullah, highlight the experiences of students, prominent figures associated with the university, and the establishment of its halls.

However, the existing literature does not directly connect the university functions to the urban growth of Dhaka city. While information is there about the influx of population and the

setting up of quarters and halls for the university staff and students, did the government undertake specific measures within the city to accommodate the rising population, keeping in mind the university's needs? Were new civic measures or administrative urban policies introduced because of the university? These questions remain largely unexplored and provide a lacuna for further research work. The conclusion can be drawn that while the existing scholarly texts give us an ample understanding of Dhaka's urbanization history under the British Raj, covering demographic changes, territorial transitions, urban landscape, they do not establish an explicit picture about University of Dhaka's crucial role in the urban burgeoning of the city during the British Raj.

Methodology

This study has been done using a historical, qualitative and elucidative research strategy to investigate the synergistic connection between the urban evolution of the city of Dhaka and the University of Dhaka during the British colonial era. The study is reliant on document analysis and synthesis. The data is comprised of a multifarious range of published and archival sources, including primary and administrative documents (District Gazetteers, Annual Institutional Reports), Archival Records (Dacca Museum Reports, Periodicals), and secondary scholarly literature (Journal Articles, Book Chapters), alongside limited use of reliable websites. The main analytical approach is contextual historical analysis, with an emphasis on uncovering causal patterns across three thematic areas: mapping the university's role as a socio-economic engine for the growth of new trade and housing rentals, tracing its role as an infrastructural catalyst for the development of civic infrastructure, and finally integrating these findings to figure out the mutually beneficial relationship that drove the city's modernization, thus completing the research gap identified within the existing scholarship.

Discussion: Colonial Background of Dhaka

We can investigate the unique role played by Dhaka University in transforming the socio-economic and urban structure of the capital of Dhaka during the third phase of the British regime.⁵ Dhaka has a glorious economic and

political history of its own. The city had assumed great political significance as the capital of Mughal Bengal Subah.⁶ In the mid-19th century, Dhaka witnessed invigoration once again and had grown into stature as an important administrative division, educational and commercial centre, to take on a more prominent role in Bengal. In 1905, Dhaka emerged as the capital of the newly formed Eastern Bengal and Assam province and it came as a breakthrough for the city.⁷ During, 1905-1911, when Dhaka was the provincial capital, its political and administrative status was boosted. Increased opportunities for jobs led to an increase in the population, which resulted in increased demand for public services. More government grants were offered before the municipal programs.

With the annulment of the first partition of Bengal presidency in 1911, the political value of Dhaka immediately decreased. The city was again reduced to a mere divisional headquarters and the general flow of public subsidies had dried up, reducing municipal services considerably. During the First World War, Dhaka and the rest of India had to experience cuts in budgets to contribute to war efforts. Inflation followed the retrenchment of the war. Furthermore, it was struck by the massive influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 before Dhaka could even recover from these two existing ills. On top of that, Smallpox and Cholera broke out concurrently and took a heavy toll on lives to make the situation more chaotic and troublesome. The misery caused by these epidemics highlighted the need to provide the people with better civic services. This increased sense of civic duty on the part of the city's leadership coincided with the initiation by the Government of India Act of 1919 and the introduction of Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The Act of 1919 assured the colonial subjects a gradual transition of power and made elected regional ministers responsible for local self-government. Many changes rekindled interest in the subcontinent's municipalities and promoted a more involved political life in local communities. The establishment of the university in 1921 largely accelerated these activities in Dhaka.⁸

Foundation of the University of Dhaka and the rising transformation in Dhaka city

After the first partition of Bengal Presidency in 1905, as per an initiative taken by Viceroy George Nathaniel Curzon, Dhaka turned into the new capital of the new province. This politico-administrative division changed the lot of Dhaka city overnight. The government took immediate measures for infrastructural and cosmetic developments. Construction work started for new government buildings and staff quarters. Soon, the city witnessed the influx of new settlers. People were migrating to Dhaka in search of livelihood and the economic, social and political growth during this phase in the history of Bengal was phenomenal. But after the reversal of the partition plan in 1911, Dhaka again lost its status as the metropolitan capital.⁹ The stimulus for development opportunities that was created by the partition of 1905 was seriously hampered by its reversal in 1911, when Dhaka was changed back to the status of a mere district town.¹⁰

The annulment changed the attitude of the Bengali Muslim community towards the British rulers because they had been given a guarantee throughout Lord Minto's viceroyalty that the partition of Bengal would be a perpetual territorial arrangement. But the subsequent annulment destroyed their confidence in the British authorities. Acknowledging the discontentment of the Muslim society of East Bengal, the new viceroy Lord Charles Hardinge paid an official visit to Dhaka to allay Muslims' fears of growing Hindu dominance. The Muslim feeling was strongly represented by a deputation consisting of Nawab Khwaja Salimullah, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, AK Fazlul Haq and other Muslim leaders who met the viceroy on 31 January 1912 and expressed their apprehension that the annulment might decelerate the educational and intellectual advancement of their community. The delegation strongly put forth a demand for the establishment of a separate university in East Bengal. Lord Hardinge perceived the anguish and distress of the Muslim community and realized that educational growth could prove to be the true redemption of their community and acting accordingly, he recommended to the Secretary of State of India for the foundation of a

university in East Bengal. Therefore, on 2nd February 1912, the British Government formed the Calcutta University Commission to formulate a plan for the foundation of a residential university at Dhaka.¹¹

The scheme of founding a separate residential university at Dhaka met with strong animosity from the Hindu leaders as they did for the division of Bengal in 1905. However, all these objections were largely ignored by the British government, and they began to undertake essential measures for the implementation of the university scheme. Land for constructing the university was donated by Nawab Sir Khwaja Salimullah. Eventually, the Dhaka University Act was passed by the Indian Legislative Council, which came into effect on 23 March 1920. Thus, the university formally started its journey from 1st July 1921. In the beginning, there were only three faculties, twelve teaching departments, sixty teachers, more than eight hundred students and three residential halls.¹² Today there are now thirteen faculties, eighty-four teaching departments, twelve institutes and multiple centres for advanced study and research, more than thirty-three academic buildings, multipurpose conference halls, twenty-three residential halls and hostels, enriched libraries and individual seminars, thirty-four student societies and organizations, a gymnasium, historical archive, and more than twenty thousand students. Now more than sixty-five hundred students from home and abroad enroll in the university every year.

The foundation of the university was one of the most remarkable events in Dhaka's history. The institution occupied many buildings of Ramna zone.¹³ In Dhaka, there was a sudden onrush of people, and the town leadership faced problems due to the needs of the officials involved in the administration, the needs of the business community and, more particularly, the residential needs. To fulfil the needs, many government buildings and establishments in Ramna were granted to Dhaka University for its use. For its development, the university was also assigned the entire region of Nilkhet and a part of the Shah Bagh area of the Nawab family of Dhaka.¹⁴

Civic Amenities in Dhaka and its symbiotic connection to Dhaka University

This institution was the first university in East Bengal, and it made the strongest impact on the educational field of this region. Starting from the colonial period to contemporary times, Dhaka University constantly managed to influence civic and urban changes in Dhaka city. It was primarily responsible for boosting the city's urban growth, socio-economic, and intellectual developments. After 1905, the Ramna area was chosen as a location for the construction of a new metropolitan and a new set of buildings in the northern part of the city. Although Ramna was handicapped by a variety of elements, many new state buildings were progressively built for both high-ranking officials and other useful purposes. Several buildings such as the Governor's Residence, the Secretariat Building, the Residences of Chief Justice, Secretaries, Police officials and other necessary edifices, were built in Dhaka gradually. Some places were also utilized to build scenic gardens and construct networks of roads. Besides, water supply, electricity and sanitation arrangements were also raised in this part of Dhaka at that time. All these development works and infrastructural buildings were giving East Bengal and Assam metropolises a glamorous look. However, it is known that political developments did not allow the continuation of the new province for long and the partition was reversed in 1911. Nevertheless, the Ramna part of Dhaka made the new extended part of the city rather more modern and beautiful. From 1921 to 1947, it continued to function as the most tranquil and coveted headquarters of the new Dhaka University when the British Raj came to an end.¹⁵

The opening of the long-awaited university in 1921 provided additional stimulus to Dhaka. It helped to boost morale in the city, which had never recovered completely from the shock of the partition annulment. The arrival of the teachers, administrators and students at the university increased the importance of Dhaka and increased economic, intellectual and political activity along with the workload of the municipalities. The provision of residence for teaching and non-teaching personnel and the construction of student dormitories in Ramna and Nilkhet areas further added to the

demand of civic services. It was evident from the development of Dhaka University that Dhaka city was more than just a district headquarters.¹⁶ In order to appease the people of East Bengal, measures were taken by the government to establish the University of Dhaka, an educational institution based on the model of Oxford University and Aligarh University. And soon after its establishment, it emerged as a beacon of hope for the people of our country. It provided countless job opportunities and brought drastic changes in the field of education, society, economy, politics, culture and urban growth.¹⁷ In fact, the foundation of the present-day area of Ramna in Dhaka was profoundly intertwined with the genesis of Dhaka University. In 1921, when the university was founded in the area, which was known to be Ramna Civil Station at that time, numerous buildings located along the roads such as Minto Road, Hare Road, Nilkhet, and even the Press club-buildings were being utilized to turn them into faculty quarters. Good salary and the increasingly high living standards of the rising city witnessed the migration of people from other parts of Bengal to Dhaka.

In recent decades, it has been proven that cities with better amenities are growing faster. Economies and human capital are also important drivers of urban development. As far as contemporary times are concerned, the university certainly helped to accelerate the growth of certain areas of Dhaka city. The southern arena of Ramna, Dhaka, was mainly a university area for teachers and students. On the other hand, the northern part was mainly reserved for government offices and buildings. The Dhaka Club, the racecourses, several other European nightclubs and student clubs had all given rise to the prosperity of the city during the colonial period.¹⁸

When the development activities of Dhaka slowed down with the cancellation of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the significant financial assistance previously granted by the government was withdrawn. The city needed civic development. Roads had to be widened, drainage was nonexistent, streetlights were insufficient, and so on. Developments in these respects require a considerable

amount of funding. The municipality's revenue, however, was very small, and since many of the citizens were poor, it was not possible to collect funds by taxation. The people pleaded with Lord Hardinge, the visiting Governor-General, to support Dhaka. However, the government was in no mood to support much, pointing out that the local people and their representatives would find solutions for themselves. Therefore, the local government had to introduce practical policies, and the municipal election of 1912 offered an opportunity to do so in Dhaka. Political feuds started between the members of two communities during the municipal elections of 1912. However, after the elections, politics moved around another additional municipal concern, which was about the setting up of the University of Dhaka.¹⁹ In every province, the Act of 1919 provided for the creation of the Legislative Council, and the size of the councils was greatly expanded. Dhaka's significance declined and it received a setback with the change in the city's political arena after the foundation of the University of Dhaka, which would occupy most of the accommodations built during the first political fragmentation of Bengal. The development of Dhaka University to absorb the current building and other facilities was quite a strong plea at that time given the circumstances.²⁰

The partition of Bengal in 1905 provided an opportunity to improve the water supply situation in the region. There was a desperate need for pure drinking water for the majority of people, but many of them may not have had health education to be aware of their own needs. Many years ago, initial schemes for the waterworks were inaugurated for general usage on 24th May 1878, under the leadership of Nawab Abdul Gani.²¹ Similarly, in 1905, a plan was undertaken to increase the availability of water. It was mainly funded by a grant from the government. Moreover, the sudden increase in demand for private connections was partly met by enabling water-taps to be built by a number of private houses.²² Although the population of the municipal area of Dhaka increased from approximately 1,05,00 in 1909-10 to approximately 1,17,00 in 1918-1919, over that time the municipality constructed only nine hydrants to cope with the additional demand, although they established no

less than 104 in the single year of 1909-10. A new impetus for activity, albeit on a smaller scale than during the heady years of partition, was provided by the establishment of Dhaka University in 1921. 128 new hydrants were constructed between 1919 and 1927; an average of fourteen a year.²³ Progress was considerably better leading up to the development of the university and in the relatively wealthy 1920s. This was the moment when the municipality extended the water supply to include the university area in the northern part of the city. Only the civil station had previously been served.²⁴

In 1935, the municipality initiated a new waterworks enhancement scheme, with Armenitola, Purana Paltan, Wari being its beneficiaries. After the foundation of Dhaka University in 1921, Purana Paltan began to emerge as a middle-class community neighbourhood. Like Wari, students, officials of the government and lawyers were accommodated. The area was much desirable and had potential due to its proximity to the university campus and to residential neighbourhoods for the senior civilian officials of the British government.²⁵ Therefore, numerous facilities and civic amenities that were provided by the government and municipal corporations for the common people of Dhaka were given in relation to the Dhaka University premises. Even in the present time, this trend can be noticed from different government projects related to the university.

Role of the University of Dhaka in the initiation of trade and entrepreneurial works in Dhaka city

The University of Dhaka added much more to the already glorious city and Ramna area. Initially, three residential halls were constructed for the university students, namely Dhaka Hall, Salimullah Muslim Hall and Jagannath Hall. Centering around the university premises, many people had started their own small businesses and trades. Gradually the growth of the trade, the small industries also began to influence the economic growth of Dhaka. Students from educational institutions could start a few co-operative shops in some colleges and schools connected to the University. It could reduce prices and enhance quality and also the youth could learn about business methods.²⁶

Some students had taken the initiative for entrepreneurial works, and they had even started their own part-time businesses.²⁷ A former student of Salimullah Muslim Hall had opened a restaurant near the campus. There was a group of people who used to deliver milk, sweets and other food products to the halls. Many vendors' sources of income used to be student hostels.²⁸ The university did not have its own transportation system yet for the teachers and the students. Horse carriages were the only means of travel freely. There were no large numbers of motor vehicles on the roads. The *garowans* or the horse-carriage drivers used to consider the university premises as one of their steady sources of income.²⁹ There were many local sweet and tea stalls and most of the customers who used to visit these shops hailed from the university areas.³⁰ Several culinary industries of the area also flourished because of the foundation of the student dormitories and hostels. Many roadside hotels and eateries were built in places like Shahbag, Nilkhet and Ramna. Often their customers were the students and the teachers who lived in the Dhaka University residential areas. Many impoverished women in the city found a way to earn a livelihood to support their families by delivering various food items to the hostels. Some of them also found work as chefs in the dormitories. The rise of such industries and independent earners contributed to the economic growth of the city on a much larger scale. In Dhaka, the culinary industries and the dormitories near the Dhaka University campus provided several employment opportunities to both men and women and the culture is prevalent even in the present times.

Growth of the rental property business and marketplaces in Dhaka

Renting houses to students is one way of making money as a landlord, especially if the property is in the immediate vicinity of a campus. When finding a place for the school years, the first and foremost thing that a student renter generally looks for is its proximity to the campus of the university. Many colleges and universities do not have four-year accommodations for students. These students, therefore, must find off-campus accommodation for those years in which they can't live on campus.

As in many other areas, growth in the education sector is also Dhaka-centric. Many students from faraway districts of the country move to Dhaka to access better tertiary education. The city is home to many private universities and it also provides part-time household students with low wages. Many students of public universities wish to stay off campus either due to the seat crisis or the heinous "ragging" culture. Early career is also the reason why new graduates flock to cities to look for a livelihood and reside in a chaotic system.³¹

After the establishment of Dhaka University, the rental property business gained momentum in Dhaka. At present, there are several educational institutions in the city. But in the colonial period, the number of such institutions was very small. When Dhaka University was founded, many private hostels and dormitories were built for the students near the campus. The private property owners used to convert their buildings into hostels. Gradually, the trend of rental business property came into being. At present, numerous people in Dhaka earn their livelihood from renting their houses to students. Several such student mess and sublets could be found in the vicinity of Dhaka University campus, near areas like Azimpur, Nilkhet, Elephant Road and Jigatola. Even in other zones of Dhaka, such establishments could be found. But in this aspect, the foundation of the University of Dhaka, Dhaka College & Jagannath College played a pivotal role and this trend of rental property business also indirectly played a catalytic role to boost the economic development of the city.

Starting from the British period, there was also a noticeable development of many marketplaces in Dhaka. The markets such as the Rai Shaheb Bazar, Thatari Bazar, Shyam Bazar and so on were there in the neighbourhood in the proximity of Dhaka University.

Whenever the members of the university needed any essential commodities, they used to visit these markets.³² In fact, New Market, which is one of the most famous commercial shopping complexes in Dhaka, was founded in 1954, mainly to cater to the needs of people from the residential zones of Dhaka University, Azimpur and

Dhanmondi. Besides, near the university premises, the various book and stationery shops of Nilkhet, coaching centres, Gausul Azam market shops and many such other markets are located. The economy of most of these shops depends largely on the University of Dhaka and nearby educational institutions, since the students and teachers are their main potential customers.

Role of Dhaka University in bringing social, demographic, cultural and intellectual changes to Dhaka

The foundation of various educational institutions defined Dhaka in multiple ways. They turned Dhaka into a major centre of education, bringing students from throughout the country and building a multifarious educational infrastructure within the city. But more importantly, they had given rise to the growth of a western-educated middle class who were much more tolerant and progressive in their outlook and prepared themselves to take over the leadership of the country gradually.³³

But the momentous event in the educational development of Dhaka city during the British period was the establishment of the University of Dhaka. It has already mentioned that this was the outcome of the abrogation of the partition of Bengal in 1911, which had been a more significant and traumatic experience for Dhaka. The nullification of the partition, the subsequent World Wars and the demise of Nawab Khwaja Salimullah were causes of disappointment and anguish for the residents of Dhaka city.³⁴ The University drastically transformed the city into a great centre of learning, research and cultural and intellectual activities. Slowly, it formulated its own infrastructure, helping the aggrandizement of the city in various ways. The Ramna area eventually became the hub of intellectual and cultural life of Dhaka due to the role played by the prestigious university.³⁵

The development of the university was also responsible for the increase in the population of the city. In 1921, Dhaka University was founded, and the city again began to get revitalized. In 1911, the population of Dhaka was 108,551 (male-63,091, female-45,460). By the year 1921, the population increased to 119,459 (male-67,833, female-52,117).³⁶ Literacy rate also enhanced at the same time. In

1921, the number of literate people in Dhaka who were of age 20 and above was 24135.³⁷

It took 59 years for the population of Dhaka to double from a population of 69,212 in 1872 to 1,38,518 in 1931.³⁸ Migrations of educated people, merchants, bankers, teachers, workers, etc. started centering around Dhaka University. This influx of immigrants eventually contributed for the revival of the city.³⁹

Dhaka also witnessed a material and intellectual revival of its spirit. The development of the new city in Ramna symbolized material advancement, while the newly published newspapers and books demonstrated an intellectual advancement. At the initiative of several distinguished teachers and students of Dhaka University and Dhaka College, the foundation of *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* on 19 January 1926, triggered a modernist movement in the traditional Muslim society of Dhaka.⁴⁰ Higher education from Dhaka University and other colleges allowed some upward mobility as well. This phase of the evolution of the elite people in society and social edifice in Dhaka was completed in the decade of the 1950s.⁴¹

A very special role was indeed played by the University of Dhaka in changing the society and socio-economic structure of capital Dhaka during the third phase of the colonial regime. It played a commendable role in creating the first generation of the Western-educated middle class, especially in the Muslim society of Bengal. As a result of this, the social fabric in Dhaka experienced the influence of the modern middle class, which had been absent in the past. With the rise of Dhaka University in 1921, the percentage of Muslim students attending the university and colleges increased from 8.9 in 1917 to 14.2 in 1927.⁴² A highly educated community of intellectuals grew up around this institution. The Muslim Literary Society was founded in January 1926 and some of the eminent scholars who were associated with this organization's planning and activities were Abul Hussain, Qazi Abdul Wadud, Muhammad Sahidullah, Qazi Mutahar Hossain, Abdul Qader and Abdul Fazal. In the monthly and annual meetings of the Literary society, prominent teachers of Dhaka University like Ramesh

Chandra Majumder, Charuchandra Banerjee, Sushil Kumar Dey, Mohitlal Majumdar, Kalikaranjan Kanungo, Parimal Goswami and others used to actively participate. Paper reading sessions and discussion-forums were organized in the main programmes of the meetings. Papers and journals relating to society, religion, education, literature, politics and economics were read.⁴³ The University provided the youths of Dhaka and of the entire East Bengal with the opportunity of intellectual and cultural rejuvenation.⁴⁴ It drew a large number of students from rural areas, who used to live in the student hostels. But a large number consisted of attached students who used to live in the city, either with their relatives, or resided with some generous family as paying guests, probably. For the first time, a common meeting ground of the old sophisticated urban people with the new rising rural minds was created. Scope was provided by the University for the intellectual amalgamation between the urban and the rural people of East Bengal.⁴⁵

Residential dormitories of the university such as Dacca Hall, Jagannath Hall and Salimullah Muslim Hall had separate Social Service Leagues for the students.⁴⁶ Members of the Social Service League of Dacca Hall conducted night school classes for the poor boys of the vicinity and scholarships were given to the best pupils. The night classes used to take place in the central building of the hall and a great number of students used to come from the villages Nilkhet and Dhanmondai (present: Dhanmondi). Sometimes fathers and sons used to attend classes together. About 56 students of all ages enrolled in the night school of Dacca Hall.⁴⁷ Later, by 1931-1932, the number of students increased to 90.⁴⁸

The volunteers of the league also used to work at the Nangalbandh festival and took care of the management of traffic. They took care of the safety and convenience of the visitors, and the selfless activities of the student volunteers were highly appreciated by the Chairman of the District Board.⁴⁹ They even carried out an economic investigation of the surrounding areas of Dhaka under the tutelage of their faculty members. A thorough enquiry was made into the villages of Tejgaon, Kamalpur, Shyampur, Vittipara, and Ishkatal. Student volunteers of Dacca Hall Social Service League collected many valuable statistics regarding infant

mortality, births, deaths and criminal tendencies.⁵⁰

Along with Dacca Hall, Salimullah Muslim Hall and Jagannath Hall had Social Service Sections comprised of the resident students. Volunteers from Salimullah Muslim Hall organized evening classes to impart literary and technical knowledge and training to the impoverished boys from poor homes of the town. Some were also trained in weaving carpets, tapes, etc.⁵¹ Social Service League of Jagannath Hall ran two free night schools and a day school. One of those schools was located at Kazirbagh, about 3 miles from the Hall.⁵²

The university regularly contributed to the Dhaka Museum. The annual contribution towards the Funds of the museum increased from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000. It actively aided the cultural infrastructure of Dhaka city.⁵³ Curators of the museum used to deliver insightful lectures before the students at Dhaka university and sometimes lantern lectures were also arranged. ⁵⁴ Thus, the university was not merely a simple physical edifice; it was an amplifier for transformation in society that had an immediate influence on the civic life of the city.

University of Dhaka formed a close-knit social and cultural bond with the city, moving beyond its simple economic and physical impact. Annual Reports from the period depicted that the students regularly used their education, wisdom and resources to help the local community. The intellectual capital of the university was not just shackled inside the campus premises but was also being utilized for social upliftment and community education. It was a demonstration of social symbiosis and the voluntary works of the students as active civic participants during the festivals represented the cultural symbiosis.

Even in contemporary times, the university and its various cultural societies and student bodies are contributing immensely to the intellectual and cultural growth of Dhaka and the entire country of Bangladesh. The importance of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Teacher-Student Centre in the cultural life of Bangladesh cannot be overemphasized. The various programmes organized by them have been functioning for the Bengalis as a force of socio-cultural revival and regeneration.

Conclusion

This paper asserts that the co-relation of Dhaka and the university was highly symbiotic and synergistic. In numerous ways and in different fields, the Dhaka University functioned as a major catalyst and propelled Dhaka's urban rejuvenation during the British Raj. The foundation of the residential university was a landmark phase in the historical timeline of Dhaka city. It drastically changed the city's position from a regular metropolitan to a high-spirited intellectual and urban hub during the British Raj. The synergy and collaborative relationship between the University of Dhaka and Dhaka city strongly influenced the urban, socio-economic, cultural and political arenas of Bangladesh. Over the years, in various disciplines, the university has produced many accomplished graduates. It is possible to note here that most of this university's existing faculty members and office personnel hail from the same alma mater and so are the university's administrative and other officers. For its advancement in various fields, the university has provided the country with the essential human resources and played a key role in turning Dhaka into a prosperous socio-economic, cultural and intellectual centre of Bangladesh. It is beyond doubt that throughout the memorable hundred years, this institution overall played a vital role in the evolution of a new politically conscious, intellectually lively, and creative generation of young leaders among its student community and it will continue to do so in the future. It nurtured and promoted its astounding character as one of the best earning residential universities not only in Bangladesh but also throughout Asia. Since its very inception, Dhaka University was destined to play a historic, fruitful, progressive and visionary role in the future progress, development and ultimately in the emergence of the sovereign and independent Bangladesh.

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