

The Spirit of Notre Dame

A Brief History of Notre Dame College

This brief history of Notre Dame College is a combined effort. Fr Charles Gillespie wrote a history for publication in the USA. It was expanded by the previous principal, Fr. Peixotto, then revised by the present principal, Fr. Benjamin Costa.

NOTRE Dame College is situated in Motijheel Commercial Area close to Dhaka's central railway station. There is something special about this college. The gentleman sitting next to you on the Dhaka-bound train, bus or plane might tell you that he was a student of Notre Dame. He owed his success in life largely to the training he got at St. Gregory's High School and Notre Dame College. He might mention that a good number of the nation's cabinet ministers and high dignitaries and national figures were from Notre Dame and that the Constitution was written chiefly by Notre Dame's former student, Dr. Kamal Hossain. Often guardians will proudly say, "My son reads at Notre Dame." The driver of the bus from the airport and the rickshaw driver in the commercial area will know the location of Notre Dame. And if you could speak to the little girl in tattered clothing in the commercial area carrying lunch pails to an office, she might flash a big smile and say, "I read in the school at Notre Dame."

Forty-five years ago many questioned the wisdom of the college Fathers when they moved St. Gregory's College to this new location out in the countryside area named Motijheel. Almost half the property was in a swamp. There were only a few houses in the area and a narrow dirt road in front bordering the college property. Today it is probably the most valuable land in the country. And you will see that the college, now named Notre Dame, provides an island of beauty in this commercial center, like a park full of trees, shrubs and buildings where children and young boys and girls come to study or play. Most people will say that the best of all college education is offered there, and that one finds there students of all types, rich and poor, Bengali and tribal, Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist. At the same time, hundreds of poor children come day and night to the three schools where they learn to read and write, to make furni-

Catholic colleges in East Bengal. In November, 1949, two years after independence, the Holy Cross Fathers opened St. Gregory's College for boys. The following year, Holy Cross Sisters opened Holy Cross College for girls. The original plan was to begin the college for boys in the fall of 1948, only a year after the new country came into existence. The person chosen to lead this effort was a veteran missionary, Fr. John Harrington, with the help of an older missionary priest, Fr. Raymond Switalski, and two newcomers, Frs. Gerald McMahon and Robert Waichulis.

The Beginning — St. Gregory's College (1949-54)

From 1876 to 1888, the Benedictines founded St. Placid's High School in Chittagong and another school in Dhaka which they named after the famous monk-Pope, St. Gregory the Great. In 1918, the Brothers of Holy Cross had taken over the direction of St. Gregory's. Down through the years, the school built a reputation for excellent education unequalled among other schools in Dhaka. So the college founding Fathers had the great advantage of the reputation of St. Gregory's to start with. They simply moved into the same building and proclaimed that they intended to build on this ten-year high school course offered by the skillful and dedicated Holy Cross Brothers and extend it through another two years of intermediate level college. The high school classes began at 10:00 AM, so college classes were scheduled early, from 7:30 to 10:00 AM. St. Gregory's College began the first classes on November 3, 1949. The new college began with two sections, eight students in Arts and eleven in Commerce, for a total of nineteen students, with four priests: Fathers Harrington, Martin, Switalski and McMahon, and four other hired teachers to complete the teaching staff. In November 1950 two more priests, Father Harry Bride and Charles

enrollment, conditions once more became hopelessly crowded. The new quarters acquired in 1950 actually were intended only as a temporary measure. So in 1953 the search began for a larger property. Fr. Harrington and the new district superior, Fr. Joseph Rick, spent much time in various parts of Dhaka city and its suburbs looking over prospective sites. The government finally made available seven and one-sixth acres in the Motijheel area, just north of what was then the city. The area was completely undeveloped, largely under water and was approachable by a dirt road from one direction only. But it was apparent that the area would develop in the ensuing years. It has since developed into the main commercial area of Dhaka and the nation and the present college is buried among multi-storey office buildings and residential flats.

Construction of the new building began in 1954 under a local contractor who was also building the new Holy Family Hospital in Dhaka, to be staffed by the Medical Mission Sisters. Fr. Rick served as a supervisor for the college construction. After one-and-one-half floors were finished, a snag was discovered. Dr. Desa, the engineer friend who had been living with the Fathers, discovered that the construction as planned would not be strong enough to support the weight of three stories. The government architect suggested that the contractor be required to tear everything down and start over again at his own expense. But Fr. Rick took pity on him and allowed the plans to be radically changed in order to rectify the fault. Large pillars were erected in the physics lab, library and administration section. The plans for a large open lecture theater had to be

and personal baggage of the Fathers. Everything was pretty much in place by the time of the opening of the new session. What a change it was from the old, cramped quarters to the spacious setup on the new site. It seemed a great luxury to have a private room with a personal washbowl. The entire top floor was for the Fathers. All they had to do was to walk down the verandah to the new chapel on one end and to the refectory and recreation room at the other end of the top floor of the new, three-story, 276 ft. long building. To put icing on the cake two new recruits joined the faculty the same year to teach Chemistry and Mathematics: Fr. William Graham was a chemical engineer and Fr. Eugene Burke was a naval officer before joining Holy Cross. They contributed a tremendous amount of tireless, efficient and competent work during the next eighteen years. Frequent health problems made their tasks even more demanding.

Several new Fathers joined the staff in the 50s: Father Theotimus A. Ganguly in Logic, James Banas and Joseph Lorusso in English, Father William Graham in Chemistry, Father John Vanden Bossche in Physics and Father Eugene Burke in Mathematics. During this period Notre had excellent results; it took the first place in the HSC combined merit list seven times in eight years.

Thus the college had classes in Intermediate Arts and Commerce and Bachelor of Arts. In 1960 it started Bachelor of Science. The BA (Pass) course at most colleges has only students who do not succeed in getting admitted into a University Honors course. But at Notre Dame all the seminarians study in the BA (Pass) course as their

legis was officially open, in compliance with orders from the existing government, but in fact it was closed in solidarity with the civil disobedience campaign of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League. From March 25, when the Civil War began, the extreme risk for students to come for classes was so obvious that there was no longer need to pretend the college was running. Still some of the fathers had to stay there in case any military should come to inquire. The government insisted that the college remain open, for they wanted all institutions to continue normally in order to give the world the impression that the uprising in the country was of little consequence. But most students of college and university age had gone to the villages, from where they either left for India to train to become freedom fighters or went into hiding.

The government college level examinations could not be held as scheduled in April and May, but were rescheduled for September. Only a few students appeared, and they did so in vain because after the formation of Bangladesh the results of these examinations were declared invalid.

Post-War Concessions to Students

After independence classes did not resume until March, 1972, and even then attendance was thin. Although a whole year had been lost, the missed examinations were rescheduled. And an extraordinary concession was made: students were promoted one year automatically in order that they not be penalized for the year they lost in fighting for the independence of the country. So two groups of student had to be admitted into college at the same time, those who should have been admitted in July, 1971 and those due to begin in July, 1972 but had lost their last year of study. Moreover, the colleges were asked to make all arrangements possible so that they could accommodate double the number they usually admitted. And the two year intermediate college course was condensed into one year; at the end of that course students were required to appear for only five major examinations instead of the usual ten. These moves seriously disrupted, or even destroyed, the standard of education in the country. They helped foster an attitude among students and many teachers that certificates and degrees could be attained without going through years of regular and serious study. This set the pattern that has carried on throughout the country: continued involvement of students in politics, which interferes seriously with proper conduct of educational institutions, neglect of regular study, crash preparation for exams during the last months with the help of tutors, and widespread cheating in exams.

Also, the government set college fees at the compulsory rate of Tk. 10.00. Before 1971 Notre Dame College had charged Tk. 25 for Science and Tk. 15 for Arts, which was just enough to meet expenses. The new fees on the average were less than half. Notre Dame applied for government grants but

streets after college from thieves and robbers. One of our teachers got stabbed on the way home from college.

Notre Dame College students were required to study the entire syllabus, complete all the labs assigned and prepare properly for examinations. When they went for government or university final examinations they were serious about writing what they had learned, while students from other colleges were cheating. Such was the atmosphere in which the college was proceeding. But the administration and teachers did not fall into discouragement. They had been through a war and many other severe problems, they had learned to deal with adversity, to adjust and carry on. There was the consolation that they were winning respect for their fine efforts and continued success in formation of students. They were not doing as well as they had years before, but were "less bad" than what they observed all around. So with that spirit of perseverance, of doing their best and leaving the results to God, they moved ahead into the next phase of their history.

The college union almost destroyed the college early in 1974. Some students who had gotten into college in 1972 after automatic promotion from high school found that a year of "study" at Notre Dame they would not qualify in the college examinations and would not be allowed to appear for the government HSC examinations. They decided to solve their problem by taking over the college union and demanding they be allowed to appear. During the union election early in 1974 matters got completely out of hand. Polls were called in, politically motivated people managed to drive the police away, hoodlums came on campus and caused extensive damage and looting. At first this appeared to be a victory for the perpetrators of the effort to take over the union. But serious students reacted and boycotted the union elections, this brought the crisis to an end. The following year students of each class showed little interest in electing representatives to the college union, but finally did so after being urged by the college to participate. But the union that year also was very disruptive. The following year nobody even suggested that union elections take place, neither the students nor the college. Thus died the nine year experience of student politics at Notre Dame College.

Sometime around 1985 the principal received a government notice that colleges are to have union elections by a specified date. The principal spoke to the DG of Education saying "In 1970 the college could hardly manage with 600 students and a student union. But now, with four times the student enrollment and no student union, the college is running very well. If a union must be reintroduced then the student enrollment must be reduced to its previous number. Is the government willing to make up the deficit this would cause?" So the college continues without a union. All admit that the absence of student politics is one of main reasons the college is able

guided the Rover Scouts and Business Club several years. In recent years Mr. Sital Chandra Dey and Mr. Ahsanullah Habibi have taken over direction of the Business Club. Mr. Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan found a suitable site for his profound love of nature by founding and directing the Nature Study Club at Notre Dame College, then encouraging other institutions to form branches. At present there are branches of the Nature Study Club in at least nine institutions, including Barisal Medical College and Mymensingh Agricultural University. The college year book "Blue and Gold" was produced several years under the guidance of Mr. Shushil Chandra Das, then during the past years it has taken a new computerized form under the guidance of Mr. Gazi Azmal. During recent years the Computer Club has been very popular among students, under the guidance of Fr. Banas and Md. Sharif. Mr. Leonard Rozario guided the students in the publishing of the newsletter in Bangla "Dhak Dhol" and English "Chit Chat". In recent years Mr. Sharif and Mr. Philip Sarkar have taken charge of the newsletter and turned it into an attractive monthly publication. Fr. Benedict Costa, and later Fr. Bokul Rozario, have acted as coordinators of all Club activity; they also contributed to the planning of the newsletter. The Arts Club is now guided by Mr. Gopi Nath Karmakar, the Degree Club by Mrs. Nilufar

contribute to the newly-born nation. For some time the existing buildings were inadequate since the Christian hostel moved out of Martin Hall making it available for other purposes. Classrooms were arranged in that building, and later the library was moved to the top floor of Martin Hall. The canteen had been located in the auditorium, the ground floor of Martin Hall. But the noise in that hall from table tennis enthusiasts and music lovers made it impossible to carry on classes peacefully in the rooms upstairs. So Fr. Stephen moved the canteen into an old but strong tin roof building moved here for St. Joseph's Technical School in Narinda. Since 1976 that has served as a canteen for the students and teachers. After 21 years it got a total renovation with extension on both ends.

During the first year of Bangladesh the college had adequate building space. But the enrollment increased dramatically in order to help provide for education and training of future leaders of our new country. From 550 students the enrollment soon increased to 1200. In 1972 there were 2 sections of science in second year but nine sections were admitted into first year. The number of classrooms was not sufficient, so some sections had afternoon classes. Soon the first year classes were held mornings with labs in the afternoons, and second year classes were held afternoons with labs in the



Main gate

Nahar and the history Club by Mrs. Ruby Khan. Mr. GN Khan had founded the Recitation Club; now it is directed by Mrs. Promilla Bhattacharya along with Mrs. Merlin Penheiro. For years Mr. Nirmal Sarkar has guided the outward Bound Adventure Club, and recently (1992) started the Association for medical help and Environmental Health Promotion. The most recent club in the International Relations Club, started in 1993, by Fr. Bokul and now guided by Mr. Waliul Islam. Finally the sports programme is very well organized by physical instructor Mr. Nurul Huda. Throughout the years inter-class competitions in the various sports and games give students ample opportunity to participate.

Two other great contributors to the smooth running of the college have been the departments of guidance and counseling and the director of studies. In the years following the war Fr. Stephen Gomes was the counselor, then was followed by the cheerful Fr. Birkmeyer, then by Mr. Jyoti Gomes, Mr. Terence Penheiro, Fr. Benedict Costa and now Fr. Bokul Rozario. Mr. Terence Penheiro for many years has been making a very active and effective contribution to the smooth running of the college as Director of Studies.

25 Years Completed: New Direction

The changes that had been going on in the college were taking place without a definite plan. Instead the college responded to a series of crises with determination to continue doing the best it could. But somehow a pattern was emerging. It was time for an evaluation, time to set priorities and lay plans for running a college that would be relevant to the times.

But first a celebration was in order. Notre Dame had completed 25 years, Nov. 1949-Nov. 1974. The event was fittingly commemorated by an elaborate function held on the college grounds on Feb. 13, 1975. A special four-page supplement named "Notre Dame College — Yesterday and Today" was published in two national newspapers, one English and the other Bengali. Fr. Gillespie contributed the feature article, "A Short History of the College." The college yearbook, the blue and gold, published a 25th anniversary volume. Photos of the seven Principals were included: Fathers Harrington, Martin, Ganguly, Graham, Vanden Bossche, Timm and Wheeler. An article written by the Foreign Minister, Dr. Kamal Hossain, when he was a student, was also reproduced. Thus, the college reached a milestone having rendered 25 years of service to the Christian Community as well as to the general public of Bangladesh.

A major reason for the success of the college those 25 years were that it has a core of highly qualified and motivated priests, foreign and native, who considered the college as their apostolate. They had at their hands sufficient financial resources so were able to keep the classes small enough to give personal attention. But this situation was changing. Very few foreign priests remained, and classes were becoming larger. The college was becoming more like other colleges. But still it ran well. The atmosphere there was different from what was found at other colleges. There is something special about Notre Dame.

Expansion of College

Following the independence struggle each year the college increased its activity in order to

mornings. In 1972 literacy classes were taught afternoons on the ground floor of the main building. Notre Dame College being one of the first institutions to respond to the urging of the nation to contribute to the raising of literacy. These classes were soon moved to the top floor of Martin Hall. They continued there until about 1979 when they moved into a second tin roof building from St. Joseph's Technical School which was set up at the south-east corner of the college campus in order to provide temporary shelter for refugees from the 1974 flood.

In 1977 the library was moved to the top floor of Martin Hall, the biology lab moved into the previous library room on the first floor of the main college building. Then by breaking down and erecting some walls, the ground floor geography lab and rooms vacated by the ISC and BSc biology labs were converted into four classrooms for new sections of commerce and additional sections of science.

Several social projects were stated, almost all of them being accommodated in temporary structures built at the south end of the campus. Included were the literacy (primary) school, medical clinic, technical school, abandoned boys hostel and a kitchen for the social projects. Other additions of changes were made to accommodate various projects or needs. But nothing of major size was attempted during those years.

Hopes for the Future

From time to time Notre Dame receives recognition for its contribution in education. Twice in recent years it was awarded a government prize for being the best college; in 1994 Mr. Sushanta Sarkar was awarded a prize for being the best college teacher.

Notre Dame College is one of, if not the principal, works of the Congregation of Holy Cross in Bangladesh. Few would deny its importance in the continuing development of the nation. Its future, however, will depend on the encouragement and training of local Holy Cross personnel to carry on the work.

What makes Notre Dame special today? To answer this, one must begin with what is written above, its history. For it was founded by a group of dedicated and highly competent fathers from USA, they were joined by many very competent teachers and staff who came to share in this dedication on behalf of the college and students. Through their effort it came to be considered one of the best colleges in the country. Politics before and after the war of independence entered the college and almost destroyed it. But a group of fathers, teachers and staff with great personal sacrifice carried the college through the crisis and guided it through the many adjustments made since independence of the country. Today the college attempts to give students a very fine preparation for higher studies and life based on definite ideals of education, character and social involvement. The present faculty, administration and staff work very much as a team or family, united in their tireless effort of preparing suitable citizens for the society and country.

For the future, the college will continue to offer this same priceless contribution to its students and the country, as long as it keeps foremost in mind its ideals, maintains its determination to excel, treats with respect and dignity all persons whom it deals with, and resists all pressures to give up its special identity.



Notre Dame College building 1955

ture, repair motors, install wiring and make clothes. Children who work every day in factories or on the streets come in the evening to study and prepare themselves for a better life. Women from the slums come to learn about hygiene, spend the morning sewing and earn a small amount of money, part of which goes into a credit union account. They also find aspirants to the Brotherhood or the Priesthood there who are interested in them and who help them to deposit part of their sporadic earnings into the credit union especially for them. Rickshaw drivers save by depositing into a co-operative and little by little have been buying their own rickshaws, freeing themselves from the clutches of the owners. Other people and other activities can be found there. When you consider everything I believe you will find something unique and special at Our Lady's College (Notre Dame) in French means our lady, here it refers to the Mother of Jesus whom the Catholic Christians hold in high esteem.

The Background

When World War II ended, Britain was obliged to grant independence to India. Muslims opted to form a new country, so in 1947 Pakistan was created, consisting of two wings, one to the northeast and one to the northwest of India, separated by 1000 miles of Indian territory. The Indian Province of Bengal was divided and people migrated by the millions. Hindus to West Bengal, India, and Muslims to East Bengal, Pakistan.

The cultural and political centre of Bengal was Calcutta. It was also its educational centre. Many Catholic families from East Bengal had moved to Calcutta where there were better opportunities for business and where their children could get education in the many fine Catholic schools and colleges for boys or girls. East Bengal had no Christian college, but in Calcutta the Jesuits operated the famous St. Xavier's College, which is now over 150 years old, and the Loretto Sisters ran the excellent Loretto College. Some girls from villages southwest of Dhaka in East Bengal were studying in Loretto School in Calcutta when they were attracted by a Loretto Sister to give up their future as well-educated middle class young ladies and go to the slums to serve the poorest of the poor. That sister came to be known as Mother Teresa.

Archbishop Lawrence Graner, CSC, of Dhaka was a very effective Church leader and administrator. He saw great need for special efforts in certain fields, considering the changed political situation with the emergence of the new country, Pakistan. Basic to his plan was to provide opportunities for quality education. With a new border separating Calcutta from Dhaka, people could no longer go to Calcutta for college education. So Bishop Graner started searching for persons to open the first

Gillespie, joined them, after completing their one year of Bengali studies.

In the first year promotion exams, only 10 passed to the second year, due to Fr. McMahon's poor English and Logic class results. The 19 were promoted anyhow, but only 17 took the sent-up exams February 5-10 and appeared for the I.A. exams in 1951.

The second and third classes of St. Gregory's included two who later became members of the nation's Cabinet of Ministers, Tanvir Siddique and Dr. Kamal Hossain. Two students of the second batch took 9th and 10th places in the IA examinations in 1951: AF Serajul Islam Chowdhury and Ghyasuddin Ahmed, one of the intellectuals killed during the war of independence in 1971 and an older brother of Dr. Rashiduddin Ahmed who was in the first Science group. Kamal Hossain took first place in I.A. Exam in 1953.

It is amazing that St. Gregory's College could offer such good education at that time, for the condition of the city and country was so precarious that it is a wonder that any student should have had sufficient peace of mind to open a book. In April 1952 the college served as an examination center for the high school matriculation examinations and soon became a regular center for the intermediate examinations.

A New Location

Classes for the first group were held in the St. Gregory's School building that first year. But when the next batch of students came for admission in September 1950, it was clear that more space was needed and that they could no longer impose on the Brothers at St. Gregory's. The buildings they needed were soon found a few hundred yards down the road. Earlier in the year many Hindu families had abandoned their homes and property when they were forced by the tragic riots to flee to India. Fr. Harrington acquired some of these abandoned buildings, a large pharmacy and two other smaller buildings. He immediately began to convert the pharmacy building for college use, while the smaller buildings became a hostel for Christian students of the college and a residence for the Fathers. The buildings were ready for occupancy by December 1, 1950 and St. Gregory's College shifted to the new location.

The college had 51 students in Arts and Commerce, 32 new ones and 19 from the previous year. Having their own building made it possible to schedule classes at reasonable times. Night classes in Commerce were opened at the new site for working students. The Fathers lived in rooms scattered here and there in the college building or along with the students in the hostel building.

The New Notre Dame College — striving for excellence

With the addition of the new classrooms and the steady rise in

scraped. It was disappointing but it had to be accepted.

An elaborate ceremony inaugurated the construction of the new college building. Valerian Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, came to do the honors, while the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, Dr. William Jenkins, delivered one of the addresses. Along with these eminent personages were invited a large number of the elite of Dhaka in government and education. The ceremony took place on January 17, 1954. Cardinal Gracias was a marvelous speaker. He paid the following tribute to the congregation: "The Fathers of Holy Cross, who over the years have served well of the public by their educational and evangelistic labors, pledge to give to the youth of the country what their premier institution of Notre Dame University has given to the youth of America: a type of education rich in its efficiency and fullness, ensuring the turnout of young men who will be an asset to their country by reason of their moral formation, refinement and devotion to national objectives." The ceremony received considerable publicity in the local papers. With the laying of the cornerstone, work soon got underway on the construction of a large three-story building. This building was to fill the needs: classrooms, labs, library, as well as living quarters for the fathers on the top floor. It was another year before the building was ready for occupancy.

In 1954 the college moved to its present Motijheel location and was re-named Notre Dame College. The name was changed to Notre Dame as a sign of dedication to the ideals of "Our Lady," Maria, the mother of Jesus. The Fathers on the staff had studied at the famous Notre Dame University in the USA, which is run by the same Religious Order of Holy Cross Fathers. A motto was chosen, "Dilige Lumen Sapientiae" (Love the Light of Wisdom). Latin was still in vogue for use in mottos. The college seal was a combination of Holy Cross elements and symbols of the country. The patronal feast of the college was the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

The tin shed Science lab building was moved from Luksmi Bazar to the new location behind what is now Mathis House and became the college canteen. The area between the gate and this canteen became the football field, the scene of many heated contests of the city and school football league. The portion of the campus south and southeast of what is now Mathis House was still under water and covered with water hyacinth, being part of the swamp or jheel for which the area was named "Motijheel".

The New Notre Dame College opened on July 18, 1955, preceded by a hectic shift from the previous site in old Dhaka. For several days a number of trucks carried desks, chairs, lab equipment, cooking utensils

first choice. This selection of fairly good students along with the Notre Dame discipline and good teaching made it probably the best BA (Pass) course in the country.

One of the main reasons for the success of the college was its periodic tests. The St. Gregory's College Fathers introduced the terminal tests and later the bi-weekly quizzes. These tests and quizzes still prevail in the college today. It is hard to imagine how much anxiety these tests and quizzes raise in students. But they do inspire regular study, and it is largely because of the quizzes and exams that students become experts in preparation for and in writing Board and University Exams. The personal concern the Fathers and teachers took in their students inspired them, while the quizzes and tests forced them to study regularly. These are the main reasons that students of this college have gained such excellent education and excellent exam results each year. Any alumnus will include this among what he considers special about this college, as well as the discipline, classes held regularly and starting on time, and honest and fair treatment of all without discrimination. That is why alumni today are so eager to get their sons and relatives enrolled in Notre Dame. The main demand in the country was and still is for Science, and most of the best students enroll in Science. They enroll mainly because of the exceptionally highly qualified teachers, the proven dedication toward their students of teachers of this college, and the success of the college in capturing the first place in the Intermediate Arts examinations of 1953.

The college's first number one position in ISC was gained in 1956 by Sameel-ul-Hasan, who had record aggregate marks. Mohsin Ali G. Rashid was placed second. In I.A. Notre Dame students captured third, sixth and ninth positions in the country.

Independence Struggle

..... Mar. Dec. 1971

It all began on the night of March 25, 1971. That morning a new Bangladesh flag was flying on most of the buildings and houses of Dhaka city on the orders of the Student Action Committee.

There seemed to be no Pakistan flags anywhere. That seemed to be the last straw for the Pakistan Government. About 11 O'clock that night heavy firing began all over the city. People didn't know what was going on. Had the revolution finally gotten under way? From that moment the real struggle for independence started and would continue for nine months until independence was won on December 16.

Administration of the college during 1971 was a very delicate and trying task, done very tactfully by Fr. Amby Wheeler with the support of Frs. Jim Banas, Bob McKee and Steve Gomes. During March the col-



Ganguly Bhavan

got none. Caritas gave a grant and Holy Cross gave a loan, these pulled the college through the 1971-72 financial year.

Notre Dame Adjusts to the Times

The college continued its effort to provide good education and character formation to its students during the long period of turmoil. Already in 1973 it had discussed the possibility of upgrading as an autonomous institution to Honours and Masters courses. But that effort was not in keeping with the general trend at the time. The country had just fought for and won its independence, now students were seeking and getting freely many other things such as promotion without attending classes or studying, enrollment in college or school without paying fees sufficient to cover expenses of the institutions, elimination of English as a medium of instruction so that all would have to study in Bengali, full use of facilities in government examinations. The college carried on trying to instill habits and attitudes of discipline, of accomplishment through hard work, when all around these things were happening, seemingly without anyone considering the consequences.

The night session was a disappointment after only two years, or attendance was irregular, the electricity went off frequently, tube lights were stolen in the dark, there was danger to students and staff on the night

maintain a suitable academic atmosphere.

Simply not having a student union is not enough. In place of the disruptive activities of student politics something else must occupy their energies. At Notre Dame it is the many club and sports activities that direct the students' energy, enthusiasm and talents in very constructive endeavours. Many of the teachers have been making extraordinary contributions to the college through their guidance of clubs as moderators. A few deserve special mention. In the 1970's Mr. Tamal Dutta revived the Science Club and got the club involved in yearly science fairs. After his departure Mr. Sushanta Sarkar took over the Science Club and also started the Rotaract Club.

Under his guidance and that of Mr. AC Das the Science Club each year had become a centre for the first round of the national science fair. Also the club sponsors a yearly inter-college general knowledge competition. Mr. Amal Banik has directed the yearly publication of the Science magazine "Cosmos". Mr. Manik Gomes directed debating a few years, then Mr. Mukhtar Ahmed took over as moderator of the Debating Club. Each year this club conducts inter-class competition as well as a yearly inter-college debate competition. Mr. Eric Francis started the Chess Club, then turned it over to Mr. Vidya Sagar Mullick who guides it now. This club sponsors a yearly inter-college chess competition. Mr. Nurun Nabi