

100 YEARS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA

Inspirations behind joining DU

MORMEE MAHTAB

The University of Dhaka, better known as Dhaka University (DU), played a pivotal role in creating many intellectual minds and charismatic leaders of our country, giving rise to monumental student movements that led to the independence of Bangladesh. The institution, with a vibrant cultural environment surrounded by historical landmarks, has always attracted young minds. As July 1, 2021, marked the centenary of DU, we caught up with current and former DU students to find out about teachers who have inspired them, and what drove them to join the university.

"The legacy and tradition attached to its name drove me to join DU. In the past few years, the effort that all my teachers put behind us inspired me to pursue new heights in my academics," shares Musharrat Amin Maisha, a fourth-year student of International Relations. "Most notably, Dr Niloy Ranjan Biswas, my thesis supervisor, believes in me. The way he supports me to face my academic adversities makes me believe that I can do anything. I was always enthusiastic about learning new languages and I could satiate my passion by getting enrolled in the Spanish Language programme in Institute of Modern Languages of DU. I am



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currently pursuing my Diploma in Spanish Language at the Cátedra Inditex de Lengua y Cultura Española, and it has been a highlight of my undergraduate life."

"A huge part of my childhood was spent in the campus of DU, strolling around TSC and *Aparajeyo Bangla*. A campus that has preserved the Mughal architecture of Curzon Hall, along with Muzharul Islam's brilliant *Nipa Bhaban* gave me a beautiful environment to grow up in," says Aditya Intiaz, a master's student of Anthropology.

Asaduzzaman Bhuiyan's elders always told him about DU's history, and the life-changing experiences it provides. "Although after enrolling in the university, all of my expectations had not been fulfilled, it did propel me to think critically about the inconsistencies in the society and go after my creative pursuits," says

the fourth-year Economics student. "My Macroeconomics teacher, Kamrun Nahar ma'am, inspired me immensely to relate my studies to the current world."

Rashid Abid Dhrubo realised in college that all of his teachers who studied in DU had a different appeal to them. He was inspired by their perspectives and mannerisms to eventually enroll in the university himself. Now, he is a second-year Marketing student at DU. "My affiliation with the student clubs and organisations made my DU experience more exciting. In my first year, I joined Podium, a public speaking platform that groom students through crash courses and interactive sessions which instigated a sense of belonging in me," he shares.

"On the other hand, being a member of the FBS music wing for more than two years, I had the chance to perform in many

shows at the campus, especially during Pohela Falgun and Pohela Boishakh. One of my teachers, M D Ashrafur Harun, saw my enthusiasm for playing the guitar. He encouraged me to keep learning, and to nurture my talent."

Aniqa Noshin, a graduate of Tourism and Hospitality Management, shared her fond memories of DU. "When I enrolled in the university, I was soft-spoken and shy. I slowly took part in club activities," she says. "My first photography project for the university was on different types of street food sold around the campus. I went on tours where my friends and I bonded over campfires, sunrises, and sunsets."

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The 1912 Dhaka University Committee.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The conception and birth of Dhaka University

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Dhaka University (DU), the oldest public university in Bangladesh, started its journey on July 1, 1921. This year marks the centenary of the institution. DU was started after many obstacles and conspiracies; the story behind its establishment comes from the efforts and sacrifices of many selfless heroes.

The institution started in 1911 after the British Government annulled the partition of Bengal. The partition previously provided the Muslim majority community an opportunity to create better lives for themselves. The two reasons behind the delay of DU's establishment were the powerful opposition of Hindu leaders, and the timeline colliding with the First World War.

Nawab Sir Salimullah, the fourth Nawab of Dhaka and one of the leading Muslim politicians during the British regime, first expressed his anguish and disappointment to the British Viceroy Lord Hardinge, demanding the development of institutions for the advancement of education in East Bengal. The university also owes gratitude to Nawab Sir Salimullah, who donated 600 acres of land from his estate for the establishment.

In 1912, several Muslim leaders, including Sir Nawab Salimullah, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Choudhury, Nawab of Dhanbari of Tangail, and Sher-E-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq, prominent Bengali lawyer, writer, and parliamentarian,



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further consulted with the Viceroy about the situation.

In an official announcement, on February 2, 1912, the government stated its intention to establish Dhaka University. This move was faced with much contempt and disappointment by many Hindu leaders; a delegation of Hindu leaders even met with the Viceroy, opposing the decision.

After obtaining the approval of the Secretary of State, in a letter on April 4, 1912, the government of India invited the government of Bengal to submit a complete scheme for the university. Accordingly, through a resolution on May 27, 1912, the government of Bengal

appointed a committee of 13 members headed by Robert Nathan, a barrister from London, to draw up the scheme. The Secretary of State approved the Commission's report on December 1913.

Known as the Nathan commission, the members included GW Kuchlu, Rashbehari Ghosh, Nawab Sirajul Islam, Ananda Chandra Ray, Mohamed Ali, Satis Chandra Achari, and Lalit Mohan Chatterjee among others. DS Fraser was appointed the Secretary of this Committee.

However, the developments were halted by the First World War. In 1917, the Calcutta University Commission reviewed the work for DU and on March 18, 1919, the Commission approved the establishment. The Dhaka University Act (Act No 13) of 1920 was passed by the Indian Legislative Assembly on March 13, 1920.

Under the leadership of Philip Joseph Hartog, the first Vice-Chancellor of DU, the university opened its doors to students on July 1, 1921. Lord Lytton, a former Viceroy of India later claimed on February 22, 1923, that it was Dhaka's "greatest possession" and a "splendid institution". From then till now, the legacy of Dhaka University continues to inspire generations of scholars and educators alike.

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LORD LYTTON'S words of wisdom at Dhaka University's first convocation

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

July 1, 2021, marked 100 years of the establishment of Dhaka University (DU). The institution initiated its journey with only 60 teachers and 877 students.

DU's first convocation was held on February 22, 1923. To celebrate the occasion, the university's first Chancellor, Lord Lytton, gave an inspiring speech addressing the first batch of students. He was appointed as the Governor of Bengal at a crucial time. The colonial government was determined to implement the India Act of 1919, while the Indian National Congress strived to get the act annulled.

During his speech, Lord Lytton highlighted how the university is Dhaka's greatest possession.

While serving as the apex of academic excellence, DU also functions as a central premise for free thought and democratic practices. It strives to combine the pursuit of knowledge and truth with the values and needs of an evolving society. Additionally, the institution played an instrumental role in various student movements

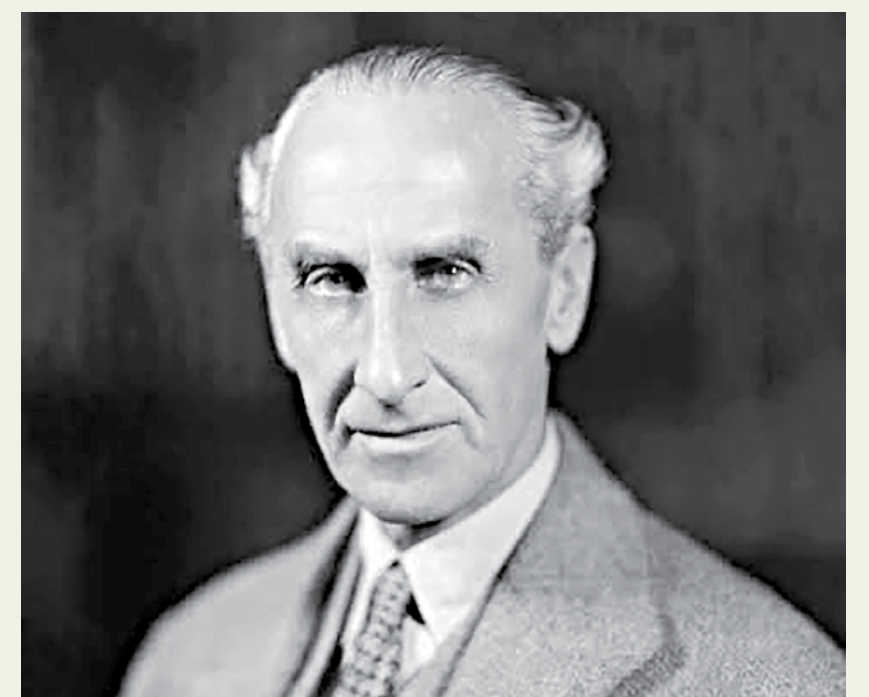
throughout the years.

Lord Lytton focused on the fact that the quality of a university is verified by its students, in terms of their academic success and the reputation they have earned on campus and in public life. He further invited the graduates to aid him in making DU a successful institution, within and beyond Bengal.

A university degree creates a pathway for materialistic success and is the stepping stone of numerous opportunities, he noted. Lord Lytton did not object to students using their degrees to transform their lives, but emphasised on the importance of giving something back. An institution is not merely restricted as a graduate factory and is a place for acquiring knowledge. After becoming successful in their own fields, he urged students to look back at their alma mater and help the institution in every way possible.

DU organised its 52nd convocation on December 9, 2019.

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Lord Lytton.

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