

23 JAN 1986

Viability Of Islamic University

Md. Harun-Ur-Rashid Askari

THE history of university education in Bangladesh is more than a hundred years old in view of the political formation of the subcontinent. The first three universities of the Indian subcontinent — Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—were set up under the colonial rule of the British East India Company in 1857, and were modelled on the University of London. But before 1920, there had been no university in the eastern zone of erstwhile Bengal Presidency. The schools and colleges in this region were affiliated with the University of Calcutta, some of which had the distinction of offering honours and master's degree courses.

The annulment of the partition of Bengal (1905) in the year 1911, left a deep mark of anger, sorrow and frustration in the minds of the majority Muslim population of eastern Bengal who had been dreaming of a university of their own. In 1912, the leading personalities of the Muslim community Nawab Sir Salimullah, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury and A.K. Fazlul Haque made strong representations to the British Viceroy, Lord Harding, in favour of setting up a university in Dhaka, highlighting the proposal of introducing an individuals faculty on Islamic Studies. To assuage the feelings of the Muslims, the then government of Bengal formed a committee (Nathan Committee) to do the needful. But later on, the Nathan Committee ignored the proposal and turned the proposed faculty into a department which is still existing. From then on, the Muslim community went on demanding an Islamic University directly and indirectly but the demand continued to be ignored.

After the partition of India (1947) a number of universities were gradually being established in the then East Pakistan viz. University of Rajshahi (1953); University of Engineering and Technology (1958); Agricultural University (1961); University of Chittagong (1966) and Jahangirnagar University (1970). But the government most unexpectedly turned a deaf ear to the demand for an Islamic University. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, no new universities were established until 1979, when on 22nd November, the foundation stone of the Islamic University was laid at Shantidanga-Dulapur in the districts of Kushtia and Jhenaidah by the erstwhile president Ziaur Rahman who undertook effective measures to materialize the dreams of the mass. Afterwards, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Khulna University, Bangladesh National University, Open University were established in phases.

The Government of Bangladesh has recently passed a Private University Act, under which some private universities have been established and others are proposed. The government has also established the Institute of Postgraduate Studies in

Agriculture (IPSA) near Dhaka, at Joydebpur. This is in short, the history of establishment of the universities of Bangladesh from her past to present. The Islamic University is one of these and essentially different from others. It has passed as many as nine years since it became operational. It has on one hand attained many successes and undergone many difficulties on the other. So, in comparison with other universities of Bangladesh, the viability of the Islamic University in future can come in question and this essay is an attempt to justify its viability in days to come. Universities in Bangladesh are basically to two categories, i.e. general (Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Jahangirnagar and Khulna) and special (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Bangladesh Agricultural University, the Islamic University and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology).

The general universities are established with a clearly defined territorial jurisdiction and all colleges within the territory naturally come under the control of the mother-university. On the contrary, the special universities are more or less teaching and non-affiliating with a very few exceptions. As far as the nature and functions of the Islamic University are concerned, it belongs to the second category (special) of universities in Bangladesh. It is, therefore, a teaching and non-affiliation university which is, in the present context, more advantageous for a number of reasons. The general and affiliating university education system has very disappointingly given rise to many complexities and problems. They are themselves overburdened with their own problems, and hence can offer little through affiliation to the large number of colleges situated in far-flung areas. The Islamic University is far away from this sort of problem. It can, concentrate on its own activities to reach its goal. The Islamic University has its own method of education, own aims and objectives which can be proved justified and the university can be proved viable even in a state of flux. The master plan of the university for its present and future, is designed with this in mind.

The Islamic University, is one of the largest institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh. The idea is to combine Islamic learning with various branches of modern arts, science, social science and technology, producing qualified and competent scholars for the advancement of knowledge, as well as of society. It (IU) tends to shoulder the responsibility of disseminating the discovery and development of knowledge in newer fields. It strives towards cultivating high moral values as directed by the state religion of Bangladesh (Islam) to dig out and spread deeper knowledge of theological learning, to dispel misconception about Islam

and its culture and heritage.

Islamic University endeavours to create a congenial atmosphere for the pursuit of knowledge and ensure higher education emphasising on the merit of the students. The Islamic University also conducts research in various branches of learning with a view to contributing to the store of knowledge and provides guidance for the improvement and re-orientation of the backward Madrasah education system prevalent in the country. The Islamic University, above all strives to introduce a broad-based structure to meet its immediate needs and will meet the challenges of the ensuing century. It can be proved that the proper implementation of these aims and objectives can ascertain the present and future viability of a university. Although the idea is unique, it is nonetheless feasible, for it gives equal importance to both religious and secular learning.

The co-ordination of two opposite streams of learning can facilitate both worldly and unworldly pursuits of an individual. Through this mutual interaction and harmonious integration, both streams can benefited by each other. Religious learning in keeping with secular ones can increase its acceptability, and the latter, keeping pace with the former can at least impart ethical values which modern men lack. Besides, higher studies on both the streams shall boost the advancement of learning. Deeper theological learning makes a man reach a higher stage of realization which contributes much to the making of his conscience.

An Islamic University aims at producing pragmatic and conscious people who can well be shouldering the responsibility of the society, of the nation, of the country, above all of the world and civilization. All this depends on the proper utilization of the aims and objectives of the Islamic University.

With the above aims and objectives, the Islamic University launched its academic journey in the year 1986, with four departments in two faculties, eight teaching staff and 300 students under the Vice-Chancellorship of Dr. A.N.M. Mamtazuddin Choudhury. The number of departments, faculties, teachers, students, halls and buildings are increasing. The provision of admitting female and non-Muslim students was introduced by the second Vice-Chancellor Professor Muhammad Serazul Islam who initiated several other attempts like opening five more subjects. This, no doubt led to the viability of the university. In the third phase of Vice-Chancellorship, Professor M.A. Hamid introduced M. Phil and Ph D. dissertations. Under Professor M. Inamul Hoque's (present Vice-Chancellor) the Islamic University is steadily growing. Through some dynamic and pragmatic measures such as opening new faculties and departments, removing

session jams etc. Professor Hoque is quickening multidimensional expansion of the university. He has of late, opened three more faculties (Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Law and Shariah and Faculty of Applied Science and Technology) and three more subjects under the Faculty of Applied Science and Technology (Electronics and Applied Physics, Applied Mathematics and Computer Science and Applied Chemistry and Chemical Technology) in keeping with the necessity of the day. His attempt to build a commemorative sculpture of the War of Independence is a historic one. The successful implementation of this plan shall make the values of the university one with those of the country which is a remarkable point of its viability as is seen in case of some of the distinguished universities of Bangladesh. Anyway, the Islamic University now most expectedly is growing larger in all related respects. There are, as many as 15 departments, 5 faculties, 120 teaching staff, 4000 students and a cluster of eye-catching halls and buildings. Most of the Islamic University graduates have been well-employed. A good number of teachers are engaged in research works home and abroad. Various journals, magazines and periodicals are being published almost regularly. Besides, seminars and symposiums usually occur and are attended by renowned scholars of the country. This is why and how, there has been a congenial atmosphere for the cultivation of higher learning which must result in the academic survival of the Islamic University.

The well-designed academic future development programme of the university is another testimony to its viability. Three more subjects shall be added to the Faculty of Applied Science and Technology viz. Instrumentation and Information Technology, Biotechnology and Applied Nutrition and Food Technology. These subjects will cater to the needs of the oncoming century. In addition to this, effective measures have been undertaken to establish an Institute of Modern Language to provide facilities for the study of Modern Languages and to provide teaching, training, guidance and such other services and facilities as may meet the needs of linguistic scholars, foreign services personnel and others. This is no doubt, an effective approach to make the university keep pace with the promising universities of Bangladesh.

Islamic University, so far as its Act (The Islamic University, Act, 1982, section 5 (a) amended) is concerned, feels at liberty to choose its own course of study or to amend it if necessary. This is undoubtedly advantageous on its way to reaching goal.

The author is Assistant Professor Islamic University, Kushtia