

Creation of Panjab University Chandigarh in 1947: The Story of its Trials and Tribulations

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Abstract

Panjab University was created at Lahore on October 14, 1882 as the fourth university of India. During Partition of India in 1947, thousands of refugee students migrated to East Panjab and Delhi. East Panjab University started functioning on October 1, 1947 as a stop gap arrangement. During its first decade (1947–57), it has to undergo many trials and tribulations to keep it afloat. Camp College, Delhi was created to serve the interests of migrant students and employees in Delhi. Panjab University College, Hoshiarpur came to the rescue of the East Panjab University by providing instructions in Science (Physics, Chemistry and Zoology) along with many subjects of Humanities. Ultimately, all teaching and non-teaching departments were housed in new campus of Panjab University at Chandigarh during 1957–58.

Keywords: East Panjab University, Social Service, Camp College, Panjab University College, Chandigarh.

INTRODUCTION

Panjab University (at Lahore) came into existence on October 14, 1882, by a Notification issued by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, in pursuance of the provisions of the Act of Incorporation. The Panjab University Act No. XIX of 1882 was published in the Gazette of India, dated December 7, 1882 [1]. Mr. Baden-Powell was appointed the first Honorary Vice-Chancellor and Dr. Leitner, the Registrar of the new University. Panjab University Lahore became a unique synthesis of the Oriental and Western systems of education. It was designed to give special encouragement to Oriental studies along with imparting education in the higher branches of European knowledge and sciences through the medium of modern Indian languages. Side by side with this, the University adopted the Western system of education and English language was also used as a medium of instruction [2].

Panjab University, Lahore had its jurisdiction extending from the border of Afghanistan (NWFP) to United Provinces (UP) including Delhi. Rather, Delhi was part of the Panjab Province. On the eve of partition of Panjab, the Senate of the Panjab University, Lahore, decided in favour of dividing the material assets of the University, valued at about one Crore of rupees, in the ratio of 60:40. But the Partition Committee, appointed by the Viceroy on August 12, 1947, for dividing the assets and liabilities of the two parts of the Panjab, did not endorse the decision of the Senate. It was, however, decided by the Committee that the University at Lahore would function jointly for the whole of the Panjab till June 1948, but the government of Pakistan did not fulfill its responsibility to students and staff of the university [3]. Therefore, the East Panjab Government had to promulgate an Ordinance on September 27, 1947, *pro re nata*, setting up the East Panjab University (now the Panjab University, Chandigarh) with

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effect from October 1, 1947 [4]. There was no fanfare, there were no trumpets. This is how our new University was hustled into an unceremonious birth.

The University inherited all the liabilities but none of the material assets of the parent University at Lahore. Nevertheless, a number of eminent scholars and experienced administrators, who had been working in the University at Lahore, came over to East Panjab and joined the new University. Hundreds of schools and dozens of well-established colleges already existed in the East Panjab and thousands of students migrated from Pakistan and joined these institutions. All these factors provided a good base and working material for the new University which grew steadily and stood on its feet in an astonishingly short time.

Birth of East Panjab University (Renamed Panjab University on January 26, 1950)

The University camp office was set up in the Press Building of the Army General Headquarters at Shimla and it began to function from October 1, 1947. Shri D. N. Bhalla, who had been the Principal of Dyal Singh College at Lahore, was appointed as the first Registrar of the new University. Sir Chandulal Trivedi, Governor of the East Panjab, became the Chancellor of the University. Dewan Anand Kumar, who had held the post of the Dean of University Instruction at Lahore, was appointed the first Dean of University Instruction. During the first meeting of Syndicate held at the residence of Justice Teja Singh, a Syndic, he was asked by the Syndicate to act as the Vice-Chancellor temporarily. He was appointed by the Chancellor as Honorary Vice-Chancellor of the East Panjab University on February 9, 1948. He held this office up to March 31, 1949 and resigned after his appointment as Chief Justice of PEPSU High Court in Patiala.

The camp office at Shimla was not adequate, and the Syndicate-appointed committee selected Solan as the site for operational HQ of the university. However, Bhai Jodh Singh, a member of the Syndicate, recorded a note of dissent, saying that “it would be too expensive to locate the University office in a hill station, and it would stand in the way of establishment of an easy and quick contact with the affiliated institutions which are situated in the plains” [5].

The refugee problem was very grave, and it was not possible to hold examinations by end of 1947. Consequently, the East Panjab Government issued a communique in the second week of November 1947 according to which all high schools and colleges, whether directly maintained by the Government or by local bodies or by private organizations, were ordered to remain closed ‘till the end of February 1948’ [6]. Justice Teja Singh guided the destinies of the University for a year and a half. The task before him was of such magnitude as had never been faced before by any organization in this country. Justice Teja Singh met the challenge squarely.

Scheme of Social Service as an Emergency Measure to Award Degrees

On July 14, 1947, the Syndicate of the undivided University decided that “after the partition all the university examinations in 1947–48 would be held in both parts of the Panjab by the Lahore University” [7]. Shri M. G. Singh, Registrar examinations, was deputed to work out the arrangements for holding joint examinations but he was brutally assassinated in Lahore on his first visit there after the partition.

In view of this situation, the East Punjab University Syndicate decided by four votes to three, that “the candidates who had enrolled themselves for the Matriculation and Intermediate examinations of 1947 at Lahore, be issued pass certificates on the basis of social service if they so desired”. Similarly, the students of Intermediate and B.A. and B.Sc. (pass) examinations were also “given exemption in one elective subject on the basis of social service”. The Government proposal to “issue degrees to B.A. and B.Sc. candidates (who had enrolled themselves for these examinations at Lahore) on the basis of social service” was rejected [8].

The scheme of Social Service was contemplated by the Government and successfully executed by the Vice-Chancellor. The Syndicate, on November 29, 1947, appointed a committee consisting of

Principal Niranjana Singh, Principal A.R. Khanna and Principal Mukand Lal to work out the rules according to which social service was to be done by the candidates. The staff and the students at the University got an opportunity to render service to the cause of the nation. The University initiated a scheme for awarding the pass certificates, degrees, and diplomas to the students on the basis of social service rendered by them. It was proposed to hold the emergency examinations in December 1947. In these emergency examinations, 13,958 candidates appeared, out of whom 8,545 were declared successful [9]. Sindhi students who had migrated from Sind to East Punjab were allowed to write answers to questions in Sindhi, their mother-tongue, for the emergency examinations [10].

Teaching Departments of University Start Functioning

The Ministry of Education, Government of India, made the first initial grant of Rs. 10 lakhs to the East Punjab University on the distinct understanding that “in due course, a proper teaching University with centralized teaching for honours and post-graduate classes would be set up in the East Punjab” [6]. The Syndicate of the new University, in its very first meeting on October 27, 1947, recommended to the Government that the following faculties be created in the University:

1. Arts,
2. Oriental Learning,
3. Science,
4. Medicine,
5. Law,
6. Commerce,
7. Engineering,
8. Agriculture,
9. Education, and
10. Veterinary Science.

It was decided that the Honours School and post-graduate teaching in Chemistry and Physics should be located in the premises, and under the administrative control of, the University of Delhi. Dr. D.S. Kothari, Dean of Science Faculty, University of Delhi was given the overall responsibility to run this programme. After much consideration and thought, it was finally decided to open the Honours School in Botany and the Departments of Pharmacognosy and Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the Khalsa College, Amritsar [11]. The Government College, Hoshiarpur, came to the rescue of the University in accepting the responsibility for housing the department of Zoology. The Agricultural College was located at Amritsar, the Veterinary College at Hissar and the Engineering College at Roorkee.

A Camp College was set up in Delhi on a temporary basis, not exceeding two years, to provide education for the large number of students who had come from the West Punjab to Delhi and who could not be absorbed in the University of Delhi. The East Punjab Government made arrangements for the setting up of the following colleges which were affiliated to the East Punjab University: 1. Veterinary College, Hissar, 2. Government Training College, Jallundur, and 3. Government Training College for Women, Shimla. Thus, the University teaching was restored to some extent, on a temporary basis, during the first two years. While speaking to the Senators on the subject of restoration of university teaching, Justice Teja Singh, the Vice-Chancellor, said that “our next problem will be to evolve the real University, i.e., the academic side of it”.

Rehabilitation of University Under Dewan Anand Kumar as Vice Chancellor

Professor G.C. Chatterji, I.E.S. (Retd.) took over as whole-time Vice-Chancellor of the East Punjab University on April 1, 1949. On his appointment as a member of the Federal Public Service Commission, New Delhi, he resigned his post as Vice-Chancellor of this University on August 31, 1949. Dewan Anand Kumar was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the East Punjab University on September 1, 1949. He served as Vice-Chancellor and as Dean of University Instruction of this University from September 1949 to June 1957. He was the first Vice-Chancellor to make Solan, the then headquarters of the University, his permanent residence. The University functioning got

consolidated under his stewardship. The number of affiliated colleges rose from 60 to 116 during his tenure. The number of students also more than doubled during this period.

The University authorities had to tackle a very tough problem concerning the medium of instruction at the University level. There were enthusiasts who advocated immediate adoption of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. But Dewan Anand Kumar was apprehensive of difficulties that might crop up by taking such a hasty step. He, therefore, advised caution and careful planning in such matters. However, teaching of Urdu was replaced by Panjabi/Hindi at the High School level in 1948. English continued as medium of instruction in science subjects.

In 1954, the University took possession of 306 acres of land, comprising Sector-14, against payment of Rs. 3,06,000 and construction work was started in 1955. Residential quarters for administrative staff, from Registrar downwards, numbering over 300, were completed before the shifting of the offices from Solan in 1956. The Panjab Government agreed to pay Rs. 25 lakhs spread over a period of five years. Later on, the University Grants Commission approved the expenditure of Rs. 76 lakhs and the Rehabilitation Ministry promised to pay one crore of rupees, which was reduced to 62 lakhs [12].

Panjab University Camp College, New Delhi

At the instance of the Government of India and with the sanction of the East Panjab Government [13], the Syndicate of the East Panjab University decided to set up a college in New Delhi to facilitate the education of refugee students displaced from West Pakistan [14]. The Syndicate of the East Panjab University accepted the recommendations of the Camp College Committee and authorized the Vice-Chancellor to approach the Government of India for prolongation of life of the Camp College. After long deliberations, the Government of India reviewed the position in 1950 and in consultation with the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of the East Panjab and Delhi decided that the "Camp College should function as an Evening College up to the end of the academic year 1956, after which the position would be re-examined".

Camp College was being run in the rented buildings of two schools and their managements were asking for the vacation of their premises. Because of poor accommodation, lack of amenities and the unmanageable number of students (4000), the discipline of the College was rather loose. With the extension of the life of the Camp College and the decision of the Panjab University to allow only 'the employees': to receive education there, the College materially changed its character. It was the first experiment of imparting education to the working people by a university anywhere in India.

Panjab University wanted to wriggle out of this situation and asked the Ministry of Education to make arrangements for running this College. It was decided to convert the college into four Evening Colleges to be affiliated to Delhi University. Ultimately, Dayal Singh College Trust took over this College to be run as Day College for students and Evening College for employees. This arrangement was approved by the Panjab University Syndicate and Senate in 1958 [15].

The Camp College rendered a unique service to the country by imparting collegiate education to more than 23,000 young men and women who had been displaced from West Pakistan and whose education had been badly interrupted by the partition of India in 1947. Besides the refugee students, hundreds of in-service people of Delhi took advantage of the evening classes in the College. Thus, the Camp College can rightly be called the torchbearer of the Panjab University Evening Colleges started at Chandigarh, Jallundhar, Rohtak and Shimla, and the forerunner of such institutions in India.

Creation of Panjab University College Hoshiarpur

East Panjab University made temporary arrangements to set up teaching departments wherever possible to start teaching. Honours Schools in Physics and Chemistry were started in Delhi

University, but this arrangement proved to be highly unsatisfactory. As a consequence, these departments ceased to function at Delhi from April 30, 1949, and were reopened at the Government College, Hoshiarpur, on May 15, 1949. The plan was finalized to hand over the Government College, Hoshiarpur, to the Panjab University with effect from October 1, 1951. The decision of the Government was communicated to the University on September 20, 1951, by a special notification. The College was renamed as the Panjab University College, Hoshiarpur [16]. It started Honours in Economics, Sanskrit, Political Science, History, Mathematics and Hindi; Master of Arts (M. A.) in English, History, Political Science, Economics and Hindi; and Master of Science (M. Sc.) in Physics, Chemistry and Zoology [17].

The takeover of the buildings and teaching staff of Government College, Hoshiarpur by the Panjab University created many problems as the rules and regulations governing these two institutions were quite different. The tussle between the Government College staffs and the University faculty was amicably resolved by the intervention of Panjab Government. In spite of many handicaps, the Panjab University College, Hoshiarpur, served the University when such a service was most needed. It gave the University a great relief and enabled the University authorities to prosecute the plans for permanent rehabilitation in Chandigarh.

Panjab University Moved to its Final Destination in Chandigarh

Under the terms of the University Act, the State Government was authorized to have the final say in the matter of locating the headquarters of the University. In the very first meeting of the Syndicate on October 27, 1947, a committee of six members was constituted including Justice Teja Singh (VC), Shri G. C. Chatterji (Secretary Education), Col. B. S. Nat (Inspector-General of Hospitals), Shri P. L. Verma (Chief Engineer, East Panjab Government), Dewan Anand Kumar (Dean of University Instruction) and the Registrar of the University [18]. There was a difference of opinion between members of committee about the location of the university campus. Panjab Government was in favour of allocating the university to Patiala. However, after prolonged deliberations, Chandigarh, the Capitol of Panjab, was chosen as the site for Panjab University campus.

As soon as the State Government intimated to the University that the permanent University headquarters would be established at Chandigarh, the plans for the construction of university buildings at Chandigarh were executed. Dr. A. C. Joshi succeeded Dewan Anand Kumar as Vice-Chancellor of the Panjab University (July 1, 1957–June 30, 1965). During his time, the Panjab University entered an era of growth and expansion. All the teaching and non-teaching departments shifted to the new campus of Panjab University at Chandigarh during 1957–58.

CONCLUSION

Panjab University, Chandigarh was created in 1947 after the partition of India as a counterpart of Panjab University, Lahore. The story of its trials and tribulations is heart rending but it achieved its aims and objectives within the first decade. The role played by its first Vice Chancellor, Justice Teja Singh, is praiseworthy. Dewan Anand Kumar proved to be a rehabilitator of the University in Chandigarh. Teaching and Research was consolidated by Dr AC Joshi as Vice Chancellor. Today, Panjab University is reckoned as one of the topmost universities of India.

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