CHAPTER XIV

PRINCIPALSHIPS OF SIRAJUDDIN AND KHWAJA MANZOOR HOSAIN
1954—1955; 1958—1959

Of a wholly different stamp was Kramet’s successor, Sirajuddin, whose term of office began in October, 1950. A prominent old boy of the College with a bright academic record, he continued to preside over the College up to July, 1954 when he was appointed Director of Public Instruction, old Punjab, an office he held till the integration of West Pakistan. He came back to the College towards the end of 1955 and remained in the saddle till May, 1958 when he was called back to fill the office of Director of Public Instruction, West Pakistan. He quickly rose to be Secretary Education but settled down as Professor of English in the Panjab University on retiring from Government service in 1962. In 1950, The Ravi spoke of him thus: ‘Considered to be one of the best teachers in English literature in the country, Mr. Sirajuddin has built for himself a secure niche in the hearts of his students and admirers. The author of many books and anthologies, a discriminating critic of painting, music—in fact, of all fine arts—he brings his variegated experience to bear upon the task of guiding the alma mater.’

Sirajuddin was all affection for the College. One could not fail to notice an unmistakable glow in his face and earnestness in his voice whenever he talked of the alma mater. He stated feelingly in a Sports Day speech that the gold and claret of the College Crest were engraved on his heart and solemnly lamented his decision
SIRAJUDDIN
to quit the College for the Directorate on an earlier occasion. As Secretary to the West Pakistan Government, he put speed into the development plans of the College; the result was the New College Block completed in 1964. Sirajuddin's first care, like that of Sondhi's, was to beautify the College. He laid the Rose Garden* between the Quadrangle and the old Tennis Courts, and the Rifle Range and its adjoining area (which had come to be used as a rubbish dump) converted into a beautiful terraced garden (Loggia) with electrically lit fountains. The expenses incurred on all these improvements were met out of College funds, as had been done in the days of Sondhi.

Sirajuddin had an unusual insight into the student mind and was freely available to his pupils who enjoyed his company and admired his animated conversation. His interest in sports made him the idol of the sportsmen who opened their hearts before him and demanded all types of concessions like exemption from classroom attendance and House Examinations. Their extravagant demands were occasionally backed by strong pressures.

The College was again overflowing with students. The enrolment figure stood at 1300 in 1954. Sirajuddin deemed it advisable to revise the admission procedure by restricting the time-honoured interview to those who had qualified in a preceding composition test conducted by the College. This had the effect of weeding out unsuitable candidates and limiting the number of interviewees. Proficiency in games still remained a qualification for admission. But those who had themselves admitted on the 'sports basis' were not always genuine players. The Government of West Pakistan did not approve of the interview-cum-test method of admission and ordered

*This was later demolished to make room for the New Block*
the abolition of the written test as well as the interview and instituted instead admission by merit determined by marks obtained by the applicants in the High School Examination. The decision was announced and enforced in the midst of the (1956) 1-year admissions. The rule simplified the method of admission and limited the discretion of College authorities. While the College was assured of a steady supply of efficient examinees, the merit system could not be relied upon to meet the demands of social and athletic life of the College. The Old Ravians took up the issue and had this order substituted by another which required the College to fill 75 per cent of the 1-year seats on the results of the High School Examination and to reserve the remaining places for the sons of the alumni and sportsmen of promise. Another order issued in 1960 reduced the merit quota to 70 per cent and made it incumbent on the College to give a 10 per cent representation to applicants from rural areas. The benefit of this rule accrued to the children of parents living largely on income from agricultural lands. The present system of admission, perhaps, does not satisfy all interests. But an institution maintained out of public funds has to bow to considerations of public policy.

The following are the more notable changes in the College staff during this period: In the death of Khwaja Abdul Hamid of the Philosophy Department in 1950, the College lost a scholar and a fine representative of old world wisdom and dignity. The passing away of Sheikh Abdul Hamid, Professor of Mathematics, deprived the College of one of its oldest teachers. Muhammad Sadiq acted as Principal when Sirajuddin went to England on a study tour in the summer of 1951 and Muhammad Aslam officiated as Director of Public
Instruction. Karamat Hussain Jafari who had gone to England in the spring of 1951 returned after the summer vacation. Namdar Khan who had joined the College in 1947 as Lecturer in History on transfer from Montgomery was promoted Professor of History in the same year. Ghulam Ahmad of the Chemistry Department was transferred to Rawalpindi and posted Principal Government College there. Abdus Salam joined as Professor of Mathematics in September 1951 and soon left for Cambridge for advanced studies.

The teaching staff was being slowly strengthened on account of rising numbers as well as introduction of new subjects like Urdu, Islamiyat and Statistics. The appointment of the second lecturer in Political Science enabled the College to start Intermediate classes in Civics as well as an Honours class in Political Science. The subject of Statistics, taught up till now as part of Economics and Mathematics, was raised to the status of an independent elective in 1950; but its teaching could not be started in the College till 1955. Students who chose the subject were allowed to attend classes run by the University Institute of Statistics. It is interesting to note that while Geography was introduced at the Intermediate stage in the beginning and was included among the elective subjects for the B.A. and M.A., progress of statistical studies followed the reverse course. Statistics as an M.A. subject came first; it was later introduced in the Degree and Intermediate classes. In 1955, the College had three students of Statistics. The number rose to 200 in nine years. Economics with Political Science was a favourite Arts combination in the degree classes. Consequently, large classes in these subjects had to be split into two, and occasionally into three, sections. History and Philosophy appeared to be
dying in 1947. While History was able to retrieve lost ground, Philosophy continues to wait for better times.

The Union was not doing particularly well. In 1951 two thirds of its meetings had to be postponed twice. A move to have the elections shifted to October did not survive preliminary scrutiny. The proposal to replace the debates by a Brains Trust met with a similar fate. The old system of debating in which the speakers came to the rostrum with prepared speeches was discarded and replaced by a new arrangement in which the House divided itself into the affirmative and negative sides at the very beginning and in which a speaker could be interrupted on points of order or information. The innovation, which came to be known as the House of Commons style debate, and was designed to provide the speakers with greater opportunities of developing their powers of argument, rebuttal and repartee could have given better results if participants had been acquainted with the rudiments of parliamentary procedures. Every speaker had to face a volley of points of order and information in the course of his speech. Much of the hair-splitting on both sides was done very intelligently and the audiences seemed to enjoy obstruction more than the debate itself. Very often a debater was forced to spend the whole of his allotted time in dealing with an unceasing flood of 'points' without coming to the subject of debate. This has obviously detracted from the serious character of debating.

The holding of all-Pakistan inter-collegiate debates became the fashion of the day. A debate advertised as an all-Pakistan affair turned out to be no more than a local inter-collegiate speaking contest. The larger number of debates meant a larger number of prizes. Annexing four or five trophies—these were sometimes
derisively called 'silver utensils'—was a heroic performance only a decade before. Now the Union could count its trophies by the dozen. Debaters did not hesitate to go to second-rate debates held by not so well-known institutions in search of trophies. A record number of trophies, therefore, did not necessarily represent a genuine debating record. Subjects chosen for debate included such as the following: 'in the interest of world peace, it is essential to destroy communism'; 'woman is the weaker sex'; 'man is a failure'; 'man has hindered the progress of woman'; 'we are all socialists, revolutionary or evolutionary'; 'the world is a mad house'; 'happy is the husband who is henpecked'; 'there should be a dancing club in the College'.

Clubs and societies usually rely on a small nucleus of active workers. A chronic lassitude on the part of office bearers and lack of co-operation between them reduced most societies to a state of somnolence. The Economics and Political Science Society showed greater interest in tours and trips than essay writing or discussion. The Psychological Seminar arranged talks on the historical antecedents of modern Psychology and its deliberations were enlivened by such colourful subjects as the psychology of the mother-in-law. The Film Society, headed by Fazal Ahmad Awan (d. 1962), was started with the idea of giving the students a taste for pictures of cultural and educational value. This was a delicate job which needed a lot of discrimination in choosing the films to be shown. Scarcity of good pictures, however, did not always permit the maintenance of the requisite standard. The entertainment side of the Film Society has been less beneficial than its work in supplementing classroom instruction with pictures on scientific and cultural subjects. A girl student, Fatima Kubra Zaidi, became secretary of Majlis-i-Iqbal in 1952.
The Ravi was again falling into the ruts of tradition. It became a literary magazine with a vengeance and was mostly devoted to artistic themes and metaphysical speculations. A striking feature of the post-Partition Ravi is the popularity of Urdu as vehicle of expression among student writers in the College. No less important is its attitude of indifference to most College activities. At times it seemed to be ignorant of what went on in the College. Where a paragraph or two of vigorous prose is given to an election contest, the names of winners are not even mentioned. The column ‘About Ourselves’, which has preserved a good record of the College for decades, comes to be filled with abstractions not facts, art not matter. Some typical passages extracted from this column for November, 1953 will bear this out:

The soft nightly whispers between the Oval and the Tower, and the Quadrangle and the New Hostel across the main College building while the bright moonlight rolled playfully on the Oval and enveloped the towers of the College in an elfish atmosphere, are no longer carried on undisturbed...........

One can see students strutting about with a cheerfulness and enthusiasm that braced up one to take a lively interest in all that goes on in the College. The Oval presents a colourful sight of students (not truant by any means) sitting on the benches talking in a gay and warm manner. Even the once lonesome Scholars’ Garden has now become a place of an undivided interest..............

With the winter season set in, with all its assets and liabilities we see the Collegiates all dressed up in tweeds, flannels, woolies, accompanied by ruddier checks, rosier lips and warmer hearts. From each musical strike of the gong seems to come a message, a message that says, behold ye students, I am old but I am of this College. I belong to you and in spite of my old age will always strive to keep pace with the youthful exuberance of my students........ Let us hope we may not be wrong in our interpretation of this message.

1. The use of the gong has been discontinued some 11 years ago.