CHAPTER XIX

CONCLUSIONS

Higher education should not be locked upon as the acquisition of certain conventional accomplishments which mark one as a member of the educated class. It should be a well proportioned preparation for effective living in varied circumstances and relationships. The interests, opportunities and demands of life are not limited to the few subjects one may elect to study. They cover the entire range of nature and society. That is the best liberal education which enables one to live a full life, usually including an experience of mastery in some specialised fields.

Education has an essential function in the development of democracy. It must not only promote literacy and make information available, but it must also arouse interest, establish attitudes and promote mutual understanding, confidence, insight and awareness of common interest. There is intimate relationship between higher education and democracy, justice, liberty and equality, fraternity and the continuity of Indian culture. Higher education must develop the potentialities of the individual, how
the values of the communities may be discovered and realised, how men may come to agreement in common action and policy, how the advancement of knowledge may be promoted and how the dignity of man may be protected. Higher education also develops in man a special mental apparatus which enables him to penetrate deeper and deeper into the mass of material and touch the under currents. It enables one to make a distinction between what is relevant and what is irrelevant, what is transient and what is permanent and what is good and what is bad, and ascend the ladder from particularism to universalism. It brings into existence distributive justice. Therefore the promotion of higher education is the primary function of the State.

How far these ideals of higher education have been achieved? We have already noted in the previous chapter, that while there was expansion there was not much progress. In 1950, there were only 17 colleges in the whole of North East India. But by 1977, within slightly more than a quarter of a century there was swift and enormous increase in their number 230. In 1950, there was only one university with 12 teaching departments. But by 1975 there were four universities with a total of 42 departments. This does not include the number of departments in the Assam Agricultural University and the two University centres. We
feel there was mushroom growth in the number of colleges. Most of the colleges are Arts Colleges with inadequate equipment and infrastructure.

The number of teachers employed is also enormous. In 1950 there were only 336 teachers but in 1975 there were more than 5000 teachers of all grades in the colleges and universities. India's higher education system is the third biggest in the world after the USA and the Soviet Union. In North East India the teaching profession is not held in high esteem both by those who practice it and by others. Like the Hindu family the academic system is hierarchical and this hierarchy provides relatively little scope for mobility. Once placed in the academic caste system it is very difficult to move. The college teacher in a rural college seldom has the opportunity to reach the status of the University professor. The lifestyle remuneration and ethos of the lower levels of the academic system differs from those at the top.

The bifurcation of higher education into undergraduate and post-graduate spheres contributes to the lack of academic progress of college teachers. While an occasional college teacher who obtains the doctorate degree
is able to move to a university department, the gulf between the University teacher and the college teacher remains very wide. University teachers have a moderate teaching load, a higher salary scale, opportunities to move about both vertically and horizontally, greater opportunities to earn more money, office facilities and some secretarial assistance in most cases and often housing and other fringe benefits. Further, while most of the university teachers hold a doctorate degree and some publications to their credit, the standard degree for college teachers is the Master's degree.

Again, teaching profession did not attract competent persons. Academic attainments of college teachers declined as very able individuals tried to take jobs in the private sector or in government, where remuneration is better and prestige higher and working conditions are more favourable. Many teachers admit that academic profession was not their first choice.

The teaching profession is less attractive mainly for economic reasons. It is also less attractive because of the nature of management which is responsible for making basic decisions concerning the internal management of the
There is increase in enrolment. In 1950, the total enrolment in the whole of North East India was 6,498. In 1975, it was 1,07,510. The phenomenal increase is due to unrestricted admission to institutions of higher education. Unrestricted admission brought about the lowering of standards of education. It is therefore suggested that admissions to institutions of higher education must be selective.

One of the means by which this objective may be achieved is by delinking university degrees with the various types of employment so that the present rush for college admission is reduced to a considerable extent. Different departments of the Government and even private establishments could prescribe their own courses of study or hold competitive examinations for recruitment without insisting on a degree. These courses may be introduced even at the higher secondary stage in classes XI and XII in order that students may not be tempted to pursue higher studies merely to secure clerical jobs.

Many years ago the Union Government appointed a
special committee to study this subject in depth. The committee recommended that, except for some All India Services like the IAS and the IPS, the Government departments should prescribe their own courses of study and hold examinations for recruitment without insisting on degrees conferred by universities. Private employers also should follow the same example. The State and Union Governments may reconsider this recommendation so that admissions may be selective.

Delinking of employment with degrees would not only discourage undue rush for admission to colleges and universities and eliminate corrupt practices in examinations but also enable the Governments to secure better candidates for the departments' work. One of the practical ways to effect this reform will be to lower the age of admission to Government service. If the age of entry to Government service is fixed at 18, the present tendency of students to seek admission to colleges for improving their prospects will be restrained.

Again, there should be diversity in the courses offered. In some departments, various courses were introduced. The diversity of courses offered increased the
strength of the teaching staff. More courses of similar kind should be provided at the college and University levels.

There should be democratization of the administration. In 1950, the student community was an amorphous mass. They had no share in the administration of the universities. In 1972, they were given representation in the Court. It is just possible that within the next decade they may get representation in other university authorities. At the same time it must also be said that the university authorities are increasingly dominated by Government. In the beginning though the Court was not authorised to elect the Vice-Chancellor in practice he was elected. But later on the right to nominate a panel of candidates for the office of the Vice-Chancellor was taken away from the court and vested in the Committee specially constituted for the purpose.

Another tendency we notice in university administration is that the role of the Chancellor and of the UGC is gradually increasing. Sometimes the Chancellor reverses the decisions of the university authorities. The UGC has laid down the norms which the university is compelled to
accept. Therefore it appears that the universities are no longer autonomous. Since the UGC is paying millions of rupees for the maintenance of standards it is natural that the universities have to accept the conditions. We need not regret for this tendency. But it must also be said that in purely academic matters the universities are still autonomous.

In North East India, the question of medium of instruction assumed great importance. It brought about break down of law and order. It aroused heated controversy. The switch over from English to the regional language was recommended by the Radhakrishnan Commission, but little progress was made in this direction. In July 1965, the Government of India outlined the national policy on education. It said "The energetic development of Indian languages and literature is a sine quo non for educational and cultural development. Unless this is done the creative energies of the people will not be released, standard of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people and the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses will remain, if not widen further. The regional languages are already in use as media of education at the primary and secondary stages. It should now be safer
to adopt them as media of education at the university stage. Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace especially in science and technology. India must not only keep up with this growth but should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose the study of English deserves to be specially strengthened.

This settled the problem of medium of instruction at the university stage. No time limit has been prescribed for the switch over and the choice in this matter was left to the universities. A special position was accorded to the study of Hindi and Sanskrit.

The adoption of regional languages as media of instruction in universities poses a formidable problem. Universities are encouraged to produce books of good quality in regional languages. The Union Government gave substantial amounts Rs.50 lakhs to each of the Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities as grant in aid for this purpose. But progress is slow and a bilingual situation in which both the regional language and English are used is developing at the first degree stage. Post-Graduate work continues to be done in the English medium. Regional languages
have been adopted only by Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities. Even here it is limited to the Pre-University and degree stages. It was not extended to the Honours and Post-Graduate stages, because of the lack of good text books. Again, medical and technical education in Assam continues to be imparted through the medium of English. It appears as if English may continue to be the medium of instruction in medical, Engineering, agriculture, veterinary and post graduate classes for a long time to come. Again, books on the same subject for the under graduate classes are published by the Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities. We suggest that there should a strong text book production centre for the whole of Brahmaputra Valley. At present there are two centres which has resulted in avoidable waste of public money.

While the medium of instruction at all stages in all institutions should necessarily be the mother tongue or the regional language, a good working knowledge of the link language Hindi and an international language English should be insisted upon at the secondary and collegiate level.

In order to facilitate the introduction of regional
languages as media of instruction in the universities it is absolutely necessary to produce quality text books in the regional languages for various subjects. Frequent changes of text books ought to be avoided and their prices should be moderate for students of ordinary means to purchase them. As far as possible technical terms in different languages should be uniform and wherever necessary English terms may be used. One of the main reasons for the continuance of the English medium of instruction in schools and colleges is the present practice of holding various all India competitive examinations for civil and military services compulsorily through the English language. Even the State Civil Service Examinations are held in English. Recruitment tests for nationalised banks, insurance companies and public sector enterprises are held through the English medium. It is therefore essential that these examinations are conducted through the regional languages. There should be no serious difficulty in working out a rational basis for allotting quotas to different states in the selection of candidates for various types of Government employment. After selection, the candidates may be given instruction in Hindi and English for preserving the all India character of these services. This arrangement may be reviewed after a few years in the light of experience gained as a result of this experiment.
Duration of the First Degree Course:

There has been a good deal of discussion as regards the duration of the course. The educational structure for various stages should be 10 + 2 + 3. After ten years of secondary education, there must be a large number of two year diversified courses enabling the student to secure employment and settle down of life. Various Government departments might introduce their own diploma courses in accordance with their requirements. After the higher secondary stage, the first degree course in the university should be of three years' duration followed by post graduate and research courses. While the two year Diploma courses should be of a terminal nature, it should be open to students to pursue higher studies at any time in future. The Ministry of Education accepted this recommendation and desired all the States to adopt it before the end of the Fifth Plan. The State of Assam accepted the recommendation and implemented it. Later on the scheme has been modified and two year degree course has been introduced. The universities should decide after careful deliberation what ought to be the duration of the course, whether two years or three years. The Central Advisory Board of Education however suggested that there may be two year Pass Course
and three year Honours course at the discretion of the University. This recommendation does not appear to be rational. All the colleges may not be in a position to start both the courses, two year pass and three year honours, for financial reasons. It is therefore necessary to decide whether the duration of the course should be three years or two years. Admissions to the post graduate classes should be on the basis of merit. We suggest 10 years secondary education, two years' intermediate or higher secondary course and two years' first degree course. Those who want to go for post graduate degree must undergo another one year course.

Examination Reform:

The University Grants Commission has rightly observed that "if any single reform in university education is to be suggested, it should be that of examination". This is true of the examination system at all stages. The existing system exercises a crippling effect on the physical, mental and moral capacities of students and has led to the lowering of academic standards, weakening of discipline and the widespread use of unfair practices for securing certificates, diplomas and degrees. It is therefore,
imperative to reform the present system of examination in a radical fashion. Introducing the grading system in place of the present system of marking will only have a marginal or peripheral effect. In truth, what is really required is not only the reform of the examination system but a radical reform of the entire system of education. Dr. Sriman Narayan suggests that "if education at various stages centres round productive and socially useful activities and includes programmes of direct service to the community, promotion to higher classes would depend not on the performance of students in one comprehensive examination at the end of the year, but on their day-to-day participation in productive and co-curricular activities. It would be necessary to keep a detailed record of these activities for facilitating internal assessment in an objective manner. If these records of internal assessment are maintained in a systematic manner and are open to scrutiny by anyone the scope for errors due to subjective factors will be eliminated in a large measure. In addition, greater importance should be attached to practical work and oral or viva voce tests for assessing the all-round personality and attainments of students. In brief while it may not be feasible to eliminate external examiners altogether during the interim period much
greater stress ought to be laid on the system of internal assessment on continuous basis.

Inter University Co-ordination:

There are four universities and two university centres in North East India. These universities are functioning without any serious co-ordination of their activities so that there may be maximum gains from their limited resources. The main reason for this lack of co-ordination is the absence of a co-ordinating authority. The Vice-Chancellors of all the universities in North East do not meet. They no doubt met only once or twice at the request of the Chancellor. It is therefore suggested that the State Government should set up a University Co-ordination Committee whose main function will be to co-ordinate the academic work of these universities and to initiate experiments in higher education. The Committee may determine the amount of grant that must be given to each university in the light of its performance and capacity for development. The Committee may consist of five members one from each of the four universities and a representative of the Government. The committee may be appointed by the Chancellor who should be its chairman.
Second, at present all the three universities teach almost identical courses and undertake the same kind of research. It would be more sensible if each university provides specialised courses not offered by the others. This would bring into existence strong centres of learning.

Third, teacher-training programmes have traditionally been confined to school teachers, it being assumed as a self evident truth that no such training is required for teaching at the college and university level. As a matter of fact teachers in universities and colleges in a developing society must be well informed and must have a critical mental outlook and a commitment to modern values. They are not merely transmitters of information. From this it follows that teachers in colleges and universities must undergo refresher courses periodically. At present feeble attempts are made to train teachers.

Fourth, Governments in underdeveloped countries have to strive to achieve two apparently incompatible objectives in the field of higher education. On the one hand considerations of social justice demand that higher education should be available to all those who seek it. Other
wise the children of the elite alone will have access to it, thereby perpetuating the existing inequalities. At the same time higher education must help the development of the country by producing young men and women whose intellectual equipment would enable them to meet the challenges of the time. In other words academic standards must be comparable to the most advanced countries in the world. The universities must strive to attain both; otherwise higher education is meaningless.

Scholarships:

We think that the present system of granting scholarships on grounds not relevant to merit must be replaced by loan scholarship system. Economic condition of the student and merit must be the main considerations in the grant of loan scholarships. The size of loan scholarship should be really generous. It should enable the student to meet all his expenses and relieve his parents from financial worry. The present system of granting scholarship has encouraged mediocrity and adoption of corrupt practices.
For the improvement of personnel we suggest that recruitment of personnel of all kinds belonging to the first second and third grade should be entrusted to a Service Commission. We suggest that for this purpose there may be a Service Commission for Higher Education. The Commission may consist of a Chairman and two others. Each service must be regulated by detailed rules. For instance, for the whole of North East India there may be one cadre for all officers in the University. They shall be liable for transfer from place to place. They shall not remain in any place for more than five years. The absence of these conditions has created a number of difficulties. In some universities IAS officers have been recruited for top positions.

So far as teachers of the universities are concerned the present classification is unsatisfactory. University teachers should be classified into five grades, associate lecturers or Research fellows, Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors. A minimum qualification for each post must be prescribed. Only those who satisfied the conditions shall be promoted to the next
grade. In this connection we may suggest that meritorious students who have aptitude for research may be first taken as Research Fellows and then as Associate Lecturers and if he has pleasant, stable and co-operative personality, outstanding natural ability and well rounded intellectual training represented by the possession of a Ph.D. degree he may be recruited as a Lecturer. After the initial recruitment a different criteria must be adopted for promotions. The criteria may include many qualifications. The candidate for promotion from the post of Lecturer to that of Assistant Professor should be outstanding at least in one essential subject. The promotion must be based on evidence of high quality of teaching, scholarship and effective participation in the department. The prime requisites of an effective teacher are intellectual integrity and independence, a willingness to consider suggestions and to participate in all teaching activities, an eagerness to study and adopt improved organization of material and improved methods of presenting them and above all a vital interest in teaching and working with students. The equality of teaching is admittedly difficult to evaluate; but its evaluation is very important and it should be based on the collective judgement of students and of colleagues who know him.
Scholarship may be manifested by a lecturer in many ways. Perhaps it is most clearly demonstrated in his teaching. It is also manifested by study in his own and related fields by participation in seminars and other discussion groups with his colleagues and advanced students and by presentation of papers in state and National meetings. Publication in journals of national reputation is an evidence of scholarship. Although the publication of doctoral dissertation or parts of it cannot be considered as evidence of independent or continued scholarly interest, sometimes the publication of an enlarged or broadened thesis is of greater scholarly value than the publication of original thesis. Quality is more important than mere quantity. A candidate for Assistant Professorship must have definite continuing programme of studies or investigation.

Promotion from Assistant to Associate Professorship should be based on the continued improvement in the quality of teaching and upon the evidence of growth in scholarship beyond the level required for the Assistant Professorship. The candidate should have demonstrated a broad grasp of his own or related fields and should have established a national reputation as a teacher. Definite evidence of independent achievement in the field of scholarship
creative ability should be demonstrated. He must have frank and loyal attitude towards his work, members of the faculty and the university.

Promotion from Associate Professorship to Professorship should be based upon an achievement beyond the level required for the Associate Professorship. The candidate must have demonstrated ability as a distinguished teacher and must have the capacity to stimulate in students a genuine desire for scholarly work. He must have the ability to direct research of advanced students. He must have produced significant work rated as first class. A comprehensive plan of future research covering a number of years should be submitted along with evidence of a fairly beginning thereon. His publications must have been reviewed favourably in recognised journals.

Promotion to the highest post the distinguished service Professorship should be reserved to the rare few who continue to do research and publish the results of their investigations, who are extremely competent and exciting teachers, who continue to do research and who through patience and unusual expenditure of time and effort do fundamental research and have an outstanding skill
in presentation, who develops in his students latent qualities and instils in them a sense of responsibility and an eagerness to seek learning.

The Office of Vice-Chancellor of a university is undoubtedly one of the most difficult jobs. The vice-chancellor is like a second Lieutenant of Infantry leading his platoon into the guerilla infested jungle. He must be prepared for attack from any quarter, from unruly student commodos, from entrenched faculties sensitive to the slightest invasion of their privileges and immunities; from cumbersome university bureaucracies, from old alumni, from over jealous ministers of the State and refined bullies of the faculties. Therefore the Vice-Chancellor must have qualifications that are both comprehensive and unique. He must be an educationist. Being an educationist he will have professional insight into the process of learning and knowledge of the qualifications needed by the person who will have to carry on the educational job. He must command the confidence and respect of his associates. At the same time he must be able to rise above the confines of academia. He must be a keen observer of the educational and social sciences and a catalyst for the assimilation of ideas and innovatives, attitudes. He should be skilled in
in dissemination of new ideas. He need to be an organiser who understands how to delegate responsibility and authority, how to define the functions of jobs, the interrelationship among jobs and the lines of communication and how to synthesise the results flowing from the sub-divided efforts into an organic whole. While organising for effective action it is essential that he understands the role of a group leader.

Again, the Vice-Chancellor must be a keen judge of the people and he must know how to recruit and maintain a staff of high quality and motivation. The quality of the results he achieves will depend in a considerable degree on the qualities of the individuals chosen for the principal responsibilities and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and co-ordinate their activities.

The Vice-Chancellor should possess some understanding of finances and especially of the preparation and administration of a budget. The budget is a primary instrument of administrative control. It is the device through which the implementation of plans and programmes can be effected.
The Vice-Chancellor must maintain cordial relations with the public. He must have political acumen without being a politician.

Finally he must look round for public benefactions and induce persons to donate generously for the promotion of higher education.

The State Governments in North East India seem to be under the illusion that progress of the State depends on the number of universities it has. Therefore there is a tendency to establish new universities of the traditional pattern in various regions mainly on political considerations. This is a very unhealthy practice and leads to wasteful expenditure of scarce national resources. It is therefore necessary to place limitations on the opening of new universities. The Education Commission has rightly recommended that "no new university should be started unless the agreement of the University Grants Commission is obtained and unless adequate provision of funds is made". Instead of having traditional pattern of universities we should have universities for technological studies. For instance there is a need for a University for Health Sciences and an institute of Technology in North East India.
Case for a Medical University:

There is an urgent need for re-organization of the present pattern of university system. Medical education so far is integrated with general university education to promote the education of the professionals and scientists. These lofty ideals could not be realised as medical institutions are kept away from the current stream of university education. The universities have not made even a feeble attempt to provide liberal education to teachers and students of medicine. The universities have failed to understand the needs and problems of medical education. The Medical Faculties of the Universities are not effective. All the university authorities functioned in vacuum so far as medical education is concerned. Again, there is inadequate representation of teachers of medical sciences on these committees. When their representative makes representation it is rarely heard. The universities do not organize academic programmes like extension lectures, extra mural lectures, seminars and workshops or encourage multi disciplinary research projects in medico-social, cultural, environmental and ecological problems faced by the community. In other words the universities have remained complacent about the growth and development
of medical education. They have so far simply acted as examining bodies for conducting examination within the rigid framework leaving little scope for new methods of examination and evaluation as recommended by various professional bodies and experts in the field of medical education.

In our country the Indian Medical Council controls all aspects of medical education. The Indian Council of Medical Research and the World Health Organization facilitate the research programmes carried out in this country. In all the States, the Director of Medical Education takes care of the management aspects of the medical institutions. Medical Colleges do not derive any academic benefits from the university. The huge universities cannot develop all the disciplines concerned with human biology. It is therefore necessary that disciplines like medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, and nursing should be organised and controlled by one body, the Medical University which alone can develop, foster and nurture institutions to train health personnel of various categories needed by the country.

We need a dynamic organization to meet the new challenges, explore new frontiers and utilise new concepts in medical education and research. For instance, there is
need for the integration of systems through pre-clinical, clinical, internship, residency programmes and post-graduate educational activities. Again we need more basic doctors to serve in the rural areas and their training should be need-based and service oriented. At present medical education tends to be speciality oriented and disease centred. It is more concerned with curative methods with little emphasis on the preventive and promotive aspects of community health. It is beyond the capacity of the university in the present form and set up to accomplish all these difficult tasks. A competent, compact and coherent regional body alone can achieve these objectives. There are two such institutions in India, one at Chandigarh and another at Delhi which are autonomous and have acquired the status of a university. The real solution therefore lies in creating a separate university for Health Sciences in each State. I would suggest that there may be one such institution to begin with for the whole of North East India and financed by the Central and State Governments. The North Eastern Council may consider this suggestion and establish one such institution. All the Medical Colleges in North East India may be affiliated to it. The recruitment of personnel may be entrusted to a common public service commission with reservation
of seats to the various political units in proportion to their population strength. The Regional University for Health Sciences will be able to maintain uniformity of standards in medical education, training and examination.

At present universities are not concerned with the social needs and tend often to be tradition bound to standards that are not applicable to immediate national needs. They provide education for physicians but provide no training to other health personnel. The continuing education of the practising physician did not receive the attention of the universities. Therefore there is urgent need for dealing effectively with the problem of continuing education. It can be dealt with effectively only by establishing a medical university.

University Legislation:

At present there are different legislation for different universities, though there is no difference so far as the content is concerned. We suggest that there is need for a single Act governing all the State universities in North East India, say the Assam Universities Act. There should be uniformity so far as infrastructure is concerned.
The Hill University though established some five years ago has not been fully organized. It has still officers on special duty though there is division of functions among them. Again, in Gauhati there is Treasurer but not in Dibrugarh and Shillong and Jorhat. Similarly as regards the composition of the court, the Academic Council and the Executive Council there should be some amount of uniformity. Therefore there is need for an Assam Universities Act.

Asato ma sadgamaya
Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya
Nrityor ma amritam gamaya

Lead us from the unreal to the real
Lead us from darkness to light
Lead us from death to Immortality.