CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After the publication of Calcutta University Commission's Report in 1919, the Government of India published a Resolution in 1920, endorsing the recommendations of the Commission and commending them to the local Government for their consideration. Strange to say, the Calcutta University benefited least by these recommendations on account of the controversy that arose between the University and the Bengal Government over the financial support necessary for implementing them. The repercussions of the Report, however, had a remarkable effect on the subsequent university legislation in different parts of the country. Thus, the suggestion that Intermediate Colleges and Boards of Secondary and Intermediate Education be created was acted upon by the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and the Central Provinces. The Aligarh Muslim and Lucknow Universities, Dacca University and the Delhi University were
based on the model suggested by the Commission for teaching and residential Universities. The Report gave a great impetus to the movement of university education in India, resulting in the establishment of new universities in different parts of the country and new ideas being infused into the existing universities.¹

The Calcutta University Commission's Report made a number of recommendations on the administrative and academic roles of the university. It asked for a new type of university - 'a university of colleges, superficially resembling Oxford and Cambridge, and more closely, the reconstructed University of London', wherein teaching could be assured its due predominance. It recommended three-year degree courses after the intermediate stage and the instituting of Honours courses for abler students.²

According to A.Basu, great emphasis on unitary residential universities by Sadler Commission was a futile suggestion as the expenditure on education was kept minimum

¹. S.R. Dongerkery. University Education in India, p.45.
in the Government budget. We may note that most of the Scottish and the continental universities were not residential. Neither London nor Berlin was residential; yet the quality of education imparted by either of them was in no way inferior to that imparted in the residential universities of Cambridge or Oxford. If there they could do with non-residential universities, certainly in a poor country like ours we should be able to do with them.  

With the establishment of new universities, the Government of India felt the need for organising a body for coordinating the activities of various universities of the nation. Thus, a conference of Indian University Board (1925). But it did not make any substantial impact on university education, as it had no statutory recognition.

In 1929, Report of the Hartog Committee was published. Report expressed its appreciation of the improvements made by the universities in their methods of teaching and of the original work they had done, while deploiring the undue importance they

---

had given to examinations, and the overcrowding of the college with students unfit for university education. The authors of the Report suggested that where there was a single university in a province, it should be of the affiliating type, partly in order to cover the area adequately, and partly to avoid the alternative of abolishing the existing colleges adding that the requirements of India could not be met solely by unitary universities, and that the affiliating university was likely to remain for many years, being an economic necessity in a large and poor country. 4

Later in 1944, came the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-war Educational Development in India, also known as the Sargent Report in which university education occupied a very small part of that report. It endorsed the view of the Hartog Committee that affiliating universities were an economic necessity in a vast and poor country like India, and that higher education could not be concentrated in selected centres for the same reason.

Following Calcutta University Commission's Report the first phase of the establishment of universities lasted from 1920

4. Ibid. p.46.
to 1927. Then came a lapse of eight years and then University of Travancore was set up in 1937. Also from 1921 to 1947, due to the transfer of education to limited Indian control and as a result of greater political awakening, there was an even more rapid expansion than in the earlier years. The rate of growth, however, was not uniform throughout the country. There were different rates of growth if compared from one region to another and also between one group in a region from another. That is, English education was not equally advanced in all parts of a particular province or among all communities and castes.

The increase in the number of universities and students was attributed to various socio-economic and political changes. It should be mentioned here that originally the education was meant for a few persons belonging to the elite classes. This idea was shared by such persons as Elphistone and Macaualy. It was thought fit to ‘impart a high degree of education to the upper classes than to diffuse a much lower sort of it among the common people’. This ‘elitist’ concept was clearly implied in the ‘downward filtration’ theory which unfolded itself by and by in those days. But despite this narrow conception of higher
education, it progressed enormously. This progress cannot be understood except in the light of the changes which were occurring in the society and its structure.\(^5\)

The most notable change, which was at once social and economic, was the emergence of new middle classes. The people belonging to these classes were those who had bade good-bye to their hereditary professions, a distinctive feature of the older Indian social order; and had embraced the new professions which were thrown open to them because of the politico-administrative changes. These professions required special kind of education. Thus, the rise of professionalism explained the rise of middle classes and growth of education to a greater extent. Moreover, since these middle classes solely depended upon education for their socio-economic status, they understandably displayed a hunger for education which baffled many people.\(^6\)

Due to the large number of students at the university, the standard of university teaching during our period was very low, and the percentage of failures at every university examination

\(^5\) Shiv Kumar Saini, *Development of Education in India*, p.104.

very large, indeed. Besides the poor quality of the students that the universities had to handle, there were other reasons for such low standards. The English medium had been a great stumbling block. The fact that a few Indians, probably less than one percent of the entire student population, had been able to master the language well, was no proof that the language was a suitable medium of instruction for Indian students. Another reason for the low standard of teaching in the universities and colleges was the poor quality of the general run of teachers. While most of the first class M.A.'s had all along been able to find good administrative posts in Government departments, second or third class people had generally sought lectureship in universities and the colleges.7

Another serious defect of higher education had been the lack of adequate number of scholarships leading to many a young man of promise being deprived of university education. In a good system it was desirable that no promising young man should be debarred from higher education merely on the ground

of poverty.  

The universities in India during the period under review significantly failed to bring about a synthesis of what the East and the West had to offer. They mainly concentrated on what the West had achieved and almost entirely ignored ancient Indian culture, literature and philosophy. No system of education can be called national, if it entirely ignores the cultural heritage of the past.  

Since the modern education was introduced in India to meet the needs of the British, it had a restricted progress and its character was unsatisfactory from the standpoint of the progress of the Indian people. As far as the number of students studying in higher educational institutions were concerned, it was 1,59,254 in 1941-1942 or about 0.5 percent of the entire population. The less percentage was the outcome of the costly nature of education, as one-third of the total State revenue was, on the average, spent on the military, education was assigned

---

8. Ibid., p.331
9. Ibid., p.332
a scanty sum.

The want of adequate resources for the effective organisation and permanent maintenance of university activities weighed upon most of the universities in India during our period. It was not the result of the economic depression only, nor any sudden alteration in economic circumstances due to an event like the Great War, but an almost chronic state of inadequate finance. At the same time, too few, even of the wealthy public, recognised that universities were among the most deserving institutions of a nation's charity. Barring some wealthy endowments which had been made to the University of Calcutta, University of Nagpur, and the example of the Annamalai University in South India, created by the generosity of a single merchant-prince, the universities had not attracted many private benefactions. They were still dependent on public funds and fees from students. The latter, again, form a very much smaller proportion of the total revenues of the universities than in Great Britain and most Western countries.¹¹

¹¹ P. Seshadri, *The Universities of India*, p. 38.
Other problems regarding university education were, firstly, a different tradition was developing which bore strongly the impact of the West. There was more emphasis on cramming from books and did not offer sufficient scope for the exercise of originality or invention. Secondly, the university education normally restricted students within the periphery of achieving good marks in the examinations. Such an attitude did not leave much scope for genuine research. Thirdly, the abject dependence of most of the universities of India on public funds for their current expenses and for opportunities of expansion was fraught with a serious danger. This helpless dependence, on the legislature was to be deplored, not merely because of its financial implications, but also because of the constant danger of lay interference in university activities which it entailed.¹² Fourthly, while Matriculation and Intermediate examinations were to be held as before continued. There was an increasing demand for the teaching of subjects through the medium of the vernacular, as foreign medium of instruction, i.e., English, had serious limitations. Finally university life also continued to be

¹². Ibid., p.39.
affected by the Freedom Movement which gathered momentum since the appearance of Gandhi on the scene.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in 1920 was the first political struggle in which students participated in large numbers. The emphasis in the universities at that time was on the liberal arts, and students in this area had traditionally been more concerned with intellectual and political issues. Law students, who were destined for an independent professional career and had little chance for a government post, were particularly active in student politics. It is significant that the leadership of the student movement was in the hands of academically able students. The general intelligence of the student leadership provided the movement with relatively sophisticated leaders, thus insuring a high level of discussion as well as supplying the nationalist movement with able young leaders. 13

Despite its defects, the introduction of modern education in India was a progressive act of the British rule. It was secular

in character, liberal in essence, open to all, irrespective of caste or creed, unlike the education in the pre-British period. But above all, it was the key which opened the great treasures of rationalist and democratic thought of the modern West to the Indians.  

Most of the nationalist leaders came from the educated classes. Knowledge of English helped them to study modern European thought and literature. Thus modern education played a contradictory role. It was introduced for the purpose of using Indians as intermediaries between the British rule and Indian society, but, it also contributed a lot in the struggle against the British rule. Many among the nationalist leaders completely dissatisfied with the western system of education set up their own institutions of higher learning emphasising Indian culture and philosophy and among them may be mentioned the Vidyapeeths of Gujarat, Bihar and Kashi; Jamia Millia which shifted from Aligarh to Delhi in 1925 and The Viswa Bharati of Rabindranath Tagore which started functioning at Santiniketan.

---

in 1921. Thus, one notices a complex phenomenon of higher education which emerged due to the introduction of education system by the British. The university educated students played a vital role in the freedom struggle. Also, it helped Indians in foreseeing the importance of higher education for achieving the best in the life and made university system an integral part of our education system.

The period under review, 1920-1947, saw the emergence of fifteen universities in the British India and the Indian States. While initiative for setting up some of them in the British India was taken mostly by the British Government in Delhi, it was the Provincial or State Governments, who set the ball rolling as far as their own States were concerned. In both places, at the Centre and in the Provinces, there were again some universities which could be traced to the strength of popular demand.

15. These universities besides those set up before our period (1920-47) such as the Gurukul University established by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha in the Punjab in 1902 (shifted to Kangri in 1924), Darul-Uloom at Deoband in 1864 and Darul-Uloom Nadwatul Ulema at Lucknow in 1898 have been excluded from this work solely concerned with the universities emerging from the British initiatives.
Accordingly we have divided the thesis into three broad chapters after an analysis of the Calcutta University Recommendations which provided a boost to the growth and development of universities in India during our period. Here again we are concerned only with the circumstances leading to their growth and not with their history, since the purpose of the thesis is just to give a clear idea of their genesis and any account of their development during our period would have been a very difficult and strenuous task given the time limit for submission of a doctoral dissertation of a university.

In analysing this development of higher education in India the methodology adopted in our investigation is obviously historical and the problem is looked at from the point of view of relevant social science disciplines and there is an attempt to write it in the light of new history of education that has emerged in the West. Keeping in view the requirements of a doctoral thesis, data are mainly collected from primary sources and printed works. However the study of history of education in British India is liable to certain difficulties such as access to primary sources, most of which are abroad, and much of what
are left are scattered all over India. Secondly as there are many gaps in unpublished archival sources, we have to depend mainly on printed official reports and surveys. Among the major sources, Calcutta University Commission's Report (1917-1919) throw a flood of light on the origin and development of the universities established between 1920-1947 while the Proceedings of the Indian national Congress give us an insight into the elite Indian reaction to university education in India. Contemporary memoirs and biographical accounts of early national leaders which occasionally record their impressions on higher education during the period, have been often used. The centenary volumes of the five universities and other secondary works which deal with higher education during our period have also been consulted. It is hoped that by a careful analysis of the data collected from the sources mentioned above, it is possible to provide answers to the questions, similar to the one's raised in the preceding paragraphs, as well as to reconstruct a much clearer picture of higher education in India during 1920-1947 than is hitherto available in print.

16. For details, see Bibliography.