CHAPTER V

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS

OF

SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE
5.0 Introduction

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where fireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in
To the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever---
Widening thought and action---
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let
My country awake!

Rabindranath Tagore

The above verse was the nucleus of the philosophy of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. He over and over again followed these lines in whichever action he took during his regime and later, in the task of overhauling the education system of the country.

From the day Syama Prasad Mookerjee was appointed Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University in August, 1934, he was faced with various challenges that awaited solutions. The researcher observes that, from the very beginning, Syama Prasad fought for various challenges, right from the Matriculation level to the University level and higher. Whatever task he undertook, it was never beyond Indian culture and civilization, with special reference to Bengal. He came forward with the suggestion, that western education should be kept at par with the Indian system of education. Though he mostly dealt with the working of the University of Calcutta, he always thought of the whole country, in his re-orientation and re-organization programme of the prevalent system of education. He stood for unity
and in matters like languages, knowledge, trade, commerce, industry, etc. In fact he wanted to maintain a uniform standard in education. But what he stressed most was the strength of the Indian youth, who he said, were the trustees of the nation. He had abundant faith in them, and thereby was concerned with their welfare and health. His main philosophy was that, there should be no discrimination between classes. He presented solution for problems of educational reconstruction of an unusual complexity. He asked every countryman to come forward and strengthen the foundation of education, raise the standard, revitalize the system and make it appropriate to the need of the hour. He also went on to say that teachers were the torch-bearers and interpreters of knowledge and thereby makers of men and women. Along with this, he tried his fullest to enrich our national language. He opined that industrialization of India is the sine qua non for the future development of India. He highly wanted military training as a part of University education. In short, education must be many sided and institutions of various types must show up so as to train people in manifold directions suited to the economic and industrial progress of the country. So, the problem of education could never be fully solved in a manner acceptable to self-respecting Indians, until and unless it was left in the hands of a Government representing the national will and freed from foreign domination. So, he pledged, that Universities should be left to be the mouthpieces of that liberty of thought and expression which a true democracy must uphold.

5.1 His Philosophy

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was a visionary of youthful energy. When the researcher studies the entire lifespan and works of this `great leader, it is felt that he worked satisfactorily at his fullest.

First and foremost, as a Vice Chancellor in 1935, he envisioned that if the mother tongue was made the medium of instruction, then there would be a huge widening of the range of subjects that could be delivered to the students. Girls’ education could also be enhanced by alternative courses. For this task to be successful, the University took the massive task of collecting the materials for the systematic preparation of text books in Bengali, and that which would encompass the various
equivalents for scientific and technical terms. Besides this, Syama Prasad Mookerjee also felt the dire need of health and welfare of students, so that their positive energy could be channelized into constructive works and lead to prosperity of the nation.

For the above to materialize, there was a need to re-organise the future plans. One of them was the Matriculation Examination which was the basic degree of education and thereby showed the path to higher studies. His foremost philosophy was to make the Indians worthy of higher education and make them appropriate citizens of the country. Simultaneously, he felt that the introduction of English would in turn help the youth pursue higher education. Thereby he proposed that the vernaculars be incorporated as the proper medium of instruction and examination at the basic level. Along with this, he felt, the need of re-orienting the then prevailing course of study, both for boys and girls. He envisioned that, some day or the other, the use of vernacular for higher studies in the University will be possible. Next, he felt the need of trained teachers for the schools. Along with this, a committee was formed to lay out schemes for the proper utilization of the donation made by Viharilal Mitra for the advancement of female education in Bengali, which was important for future intellectual progress. Improving the quality of post graduate education was also felt, specially in regard to teachers and students, thereby bringing about utility and efficiency in the national life.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee while referring to the completion of the Asutosh Building, which housed the University General Library and the Lending Library, mentioned that the walls had been decorated with photographs depicting Indian culture, with special reference to Bengal’s contribution.

In one of his convocation addresses, he specially mentioned the valuable contribution of the teachers, who in turn inspired the young scholars to go ahead after their master degree. In addition to this, the University took the task of sending brilliant young students, abroad for the furtherance of their knowledge. The students were given ample opportunities to carry on original work in various branches of study. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee felt the need of inviting
distinguished authorities in various subjects to come and enrich our University at large. In this way, the youths of our country, and Bengal at large, could become real assets in the furtherance of the highest interests of our motherland.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee dwelled into the improvement of the standard of teaching in the colleges. He prescribed that all institutions should open avenues and new careers for the students and thereby the education system should be re-oriented. In the bygone days, India was struggling hard to cope with a foreign system of education. But, the time had come for a total reform according to the call of the nation. He envisaged a proper direction of the youthful energy into healthy channels. The whole task falls on every citizen to work honestly and steadfastly for increasing the efficiency, and also to learn the value of discipline and moderation that which is compatible with true patriotism and thereby be trustees of our national honour. As is already learnt, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee always envisaged the youth with a young moral character, who would strive for general welfare. For this very need, he thought of creating a national fund, which will be called University Alumnus Fund, where old students could contribute. On the other hand, the doors of the University should be thrown open still wider, in order to elevate the nation. He always stood for the combined strength of the youth - Hindu, Muslims and Christians alike--- who would stand for the welfare of all classes; and abandon the path of hatred, destruction and violence, and go forward for national prosperity. To increase our efficiency, we need to learn the great task of discipline. He always opined that the University had to disseminate truth in all directions, and thereby train the young in openness of mind and love of truth and freedom, to inculcate right ideas, to develop personalities, capable of the largest service to our beloved motherland.

As against the view that a high percentage of students after passing Matriculation, often proceeded for higher education, resulting in national wastage due to unemployment, Syama Prasad challenged with the contention that it was not true and reforms was a vital need which was to be followed by any policy of educational reconstruction. Alongside with this, he did not forget to bring to
the forefront, the subjects which till then lay in the dark. While thinking of reform, he realized that practical lessons will lead to the improvement on the quality of teaching at the higher stages. He encouraged the University to publish the various research works of teachers and students; in due time, as it was acclaimed as works of great value.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee spent hours discussing with people about the upliftment of the educational policy. He went on to make a detailed comparison with the Universities of other countries like United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Italy, Japan. While doing so, he came across the fact that enormous sum of money was allotted to education in civilized countries, unlike India. The University was expected to take up this task with immediate effect. He envisioned, that if India was to come up in the near future, it had to educate the total population, both young and old. For this to happen, special institutions would have to be set up, through which it could disseminate appropriate knowledge. He actually pledged for a co-operation between the State, University and other educational agencies and representatives of trade, industry and commerce. He asked everyone to strive and do all that lies in this power to strengthen the foundation to raise the standard; to revitalize the system and make it respond to the needs, in full accordance with the skill and capability of the people of this country. He asked people of this country to sink all differences and work together. Syama Prasad’s ideal was to provide extensive facilities for education from the lowest grade to the highest; bring about synthesis between cultural and vocational training. He fought for a liberal education with progressive thought.

He brought in another feather to the Universit, wherein a candidate was awarded the degree for his thesis, written in Bengali. Although it was never prescribed as the necessary language for a thesis, the above pursuit demands ovation.

He always took forward the changing needs of the country. But what was more important was the awareness of the public, along with their opinion, to focus the attention of all on the supreme necessity of finding new avenues of occupation and fresh vocations and careers for the huge number of educated youths produced by
the University. He did not forget the corporate interest of the nation—he felt that it was the duty of the State and its citizens, to take up the trained skill and enthusiasm with boldness and sympathy and employ them in diverse fields of activity, so as to bring about progress, peace and prosperity. He wished, that people educated in this University could take up this task of making a demand for the fulfillment of large interests of the provinces and also for its healthy development and progress and for freeing it from the bondage of the perpetual dependence and domination.

The researcher came across another very important aspect, a little away from the mainstream education. Under the apt guidance of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the University took upon itself the task of bringing into light the forgotten treasures of Bengal. Thus, the Art Museum was inaugurated.

The main task the University undertook, was to search openings in branches of trade and industry, which till then did not attract qualified Bengalis. He pleaded that the Chambers of Commerce and other such similar bodies should come forward to assist the University at large.

During this very time, the society especially the public institution was over-bound with national administrative problems, and so stagnation started to threaten the growth. So, Syama Prasad was in search of true statemenship, who in turn would discover the existing resources, both in man-power and materials and thereby evolve a new education system, capable of complete fulfillment. He of course agreed with the idea that English language helped us to introduce ourself to western ideas and the development of science, but it never helped in mass education. Against this, he pleaded for a national education, right from the primary to University level, and beyond. He envisaged that through education, a nation could attain the cherished hopes and aspirations.

In one of his convocation addresses, the researcher finds that he hoped and prayed, that in the “years to come, it may be given to us all in whose hands rest responsible powers, to leave aside disputes and differences, to put our shoulders to the wheel of progress and to help in inaugurating of constructive work, which will make our
great province a happier place to live in, and will give it a position of supremacy in matters concerning India as a whole.” (Mookerjee, S. Educational Speeches, pp.37)

Simultaneously, Syama Prasad Mookerjee felt that the present system of University education required thorough and immediate reorganizations. In doing so, the problem faced was in deciding the aims of University education. He ardently wanted education to be life centric. He also suggested that, new vocations and avenues should be opened out to the Indians such as, the army, navy, trades and commerce, for the furtherance of the growth of Indian industry and economy.

Another very important thing he envisaged was the requirement of connecting modern Indian education training with that of our ancient history and civilization. Besides, facts like Economics and Banking, relations of foreign trade and competition, needed to be investigated. Furthermost, he stated that if western ideas can be assimilated into our educational system, without it being detrimental to the national character, it was welcome.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee was of the notion that Indian education was deliberately made secular according to a policy of religious neutrality, pursued by the British Government, who had no other options.

The researcher felt, that there was another big challenge to be taken up by the University – the plight of our national languages. Syama Prasad tried to the fullest to make Indians aware of the significance of this. All the above to happen, it was necessary to give the Indian youth an all-encompassing education which would be a honest preparation for life. Intellectual activities could not meet this to the fullest—so, the physical standard and efficiency of the rising generations was to aim at creating a sound body and soul. So, physical education was made compulsory in schools and colleges. Given adequate scope, Indian youths may form the foundation of a national force, which will in turn deepen a sense of self-respect and self-confidence in their minds and therefore ascertain their capacity and character. Alongside with this, the relation between the teacher and the students
was stressed, so as to re-established the closeness, which was present in the ancient 

system of Indian education.

Above all, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee had put extreme stress on the political 

status of India, without which no country could decide for herself a sound 
education system. He said that, the condition must give us the power and rights to 

India, to become the master of her own destiny. Then only, could a country decide 
on an elaborate system of elementary and secondary education and thus go on to 
form a strong foundation on which an University could be formed. Finally, all the 
above had to be as cheap as possible, to facilitate mass accession. Regarding 
technical education, he realized that there should be a positive connection between 
education and trade, industry and commerce, giving scope to the youth, bearing 
practical skill and talent. The total system should be freed from political influence. 
He wished that a new race of University-trained youths must go forth and 
undertake the duty of directing the affairs of various educational institutions, to be 
opened at every village in all corners of the country.

Dr. Mookerjee’s philosophy was very clear and objective. He said, “I plead with all 
earnestness that whatever spheres you may work in, let your banner be a symbol 
not only of knowledge and enlightenment, of liberty and balanced judgement, of clear 
thoughts and action, but also of charity and service. We, who call ourselves 
educated, exist not primarily for our own sake, but for adding our individual 
contributions, however humble, to the advancement of national prosperity. Let us 
equip ourselves truly and march collectively and courageously towards our 
cherished goal.”(Mookerjee, Syama Prasad, Educational Speeches, Pg. 44-45)

Coming back to the status of the University, he opined that it could be the home of 
progressive thought and culture, leading to national hopes and aspirations. The 
University could enhance the intellectual life and thought of a nation, inspired by a 
zeal for unselfish and denoted service. He urged that the University could mould 
the activities of the worthy citizens, in full remembrance of the fact that the 
progress of nation, if steadily maintained, can prevent the degeneration of a society.
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee advises the youth or students to preserve the old traditions of our country and at the same time, absorb the best elements of western culture. The paths of provincialism should be eschewed and the cause of Indian unity needed to be promoted. Of course, he admits, that mere production of such youths will not solve the problem; but it will be the duty of the state to re-adjust and modify the policies, affecting the political and economic condition of the society so as to fully utilize this service in a useful manner.

Syama Prasad fought against the motion that higher education was an unnecessary luxury benefiting a comparatively small number of people and of a very doubtful value to the largest interests of the nation. According to him, there should be an effort to boldly assert and prove that a University could be the source of progressive knowledge and culture; and of course with the unstinted support of the state and the public.

The researcher felt that he wanted the traditions of the country to be rightfully followed by the youth of the day. Many illustrious men and women did contribute quite a lot of the country’s culture, education, tradition, knowledge, industrial growth, economy, politics, etc. In fact, tradition should fill the people with both pride and responsibility. The people needed to mould their own lives and activities in accordance with the ideals of their chosen hero. Again, this tradition ought to be linked with the changing needs and hold them in the correct perspective before those, who were still unaware of their tradition.

Syama Prasad went on to say that India has had a splendid past. We have had brilliant epochs in the history of India, when she could justly claim respectful attention from the civilized world. There were times when the political unification of the country ceased to be a mere dream of patriots and poets and came near a historical reality, thereby giving rise to an outburst of activity in the domain of literature, religion, science and art. Indian culture had retained its vitality and vigour due to which, she had found a worthy place among the civilization of all ages- in fact, its philosophy and teachings would inspire millions.
He opined that India fell, mainly because her people were at the critical hour, divided and disorganized—pray to the political upheaval. He felt strongly about the fact, that, while the national and political unity of India was successfully achieved by great individuals, the masses did not at all times feel an interest in its presentation. Thus, we found ourselves alive, but in bondage. But, on the other hand, western education had helped to broaden our outlook, especially the sense of patriotism. Ideals of liberty and equality had steadily spread from all the corners of Hindustan, and thereby the vitality of Indian nationalism was witnessed.

While Syama Prasad’s philosophy regarding nationalism and education, was mainly directed to the role of the University, he did not overlook the other important facets in the life of the Indians.

He noticed that there was ample decay in the area of creative Indian arts, which once flourished in this land. Also, the decline of the indigenous industries of India, specially the cottage industries, was noticed. He blamed the state, for which India’s poverty and distress led to an economic and industrial downfall.

Syama Prasad went on to plead for a new orientation regarding the relationship of students with colleges and Universities. He asked the authorities, that instead of focusing discipline, it should expect discipline to come from the students from within. He reminded everyone, that India came under foreign domination because of intense jealousy between different factions. So, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee made a frequent appeal to the alumni of Indian Universities to unite in efforts for the making of their motherland. In addition, he opined that the colleges should provide liberal education that is expansive, catholic, free from narrowness and bigotry in ideas or doctrines, apt for a broad and enlightened mind. He claimed that he was convinced that the fullest development of the mind is possible only by the natural approaches, that is, the mother tongue, through which a great revival of the richness of Indian languages would be realized.
In order to facilitate this conviction, Syama Prasad made elaborate provisions for different Indian languages. Important Indian languages other than Bengali had been included for the M.A. examination. Also English was offered as a major option.

He believed that we are bound to one another by ties of brotherhood and comradeship; we are but strengthening the foundation of that great Indian nationhood, the attainment of which has been the dream of generation of Indians, irrespective of caste, creed and race. Besides, English should remain a second language, in order to facilitate higher education and assimilation of knowledge from books written in English. And so, we need to keep in mind the need for liberal and useful education, on which will be raised the superstructure of departments of study, that which will produce citizens trained in various branches of study, theoretical and practical, and make them fit persons in the service of the nation. He went forward to pursue the cause of true education, including the local idea, the national idea and the international idea.

Regarding Student’s Union, he opined that his intimate association with the student community makes him assert unhesitatingly that no opportunities should be overlooked, for discussing the problems that agitate their minds, even though it had no bearing with their education. As for discipline, he put forward his valuable notion. He went on to say that in a country like India, the patriotic impulses of youths are bound to be all the more outspoken and fervent, and it will be a blunder on our part, if we do not appreciate their thoughts and ideals. It is well proven, that the academic atmosphere can retain its sanctity and freedom, only with the loyal assistance of the students.

The researcher, while studying Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s philosophy regarding education, came across a very enlightening observation of his. He said that, “learning itself is not always of the greatest value. The man who is made, is the greatest thing and the work of doing is the great thing in the man. But it is not the man alone that the University has to make. No men lives to himself, that no task can be more patriotic than of binding the whole community together by common association as aspirations. The object of education is not the construction of a
single man who dies and is forgotten. Benefits to the community, nation and civilization, are all that are of value, and the production of the individual man whose influence shall live for ever in the wheel of humanity--- that is the great objective of every University.” (Mookerjee, S. Educational Speeches, pp. 63)

To his countrymen, this great educationist pleaded that men and women trained in Indian Universities, be united in their efforts for the remaking of their Motherland. It is true that no country can have a truly national system of education unless it enjoys the blessings of freedom. The industrial development of a country is, conditioned not only by researcher but also by the question of finance and a sound national policy. The University laboratories, have been only partially lit by the generous donations of a few benefactors. So, the Government of a country should pursue an irrevocable policy of industrialization and a policy of providing appropriate fund.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee asked the University to do their duty, with courage and foresight and readjust and reorganize their course of study that they may worthily meet the manifold requirements of our country in diverse fields of public service, social, industrial, economic and political. He very rightly said that if the Government, the industrial organizations and the Universities are made to participate in a national policy of intensive industrialization, none can resist the early attainment of India’s economic freedom. There is of course, another direction in which, much concrete co-operation is possible, and is essential, between the state and the Indian Universities; this relates to the preparation of our youths for efficient and adequate military training in lieu of the needs of modern warfare. At a time, when Indians were unarmed and unprepared for national defence, the Indian Universities should demand the provisions for compulsory military training under the University Training Campus.

Discussing National University, Syama Prasad Mookerjee sighted that there was much disharmony and disunity in India. For this, the Indian Universities should, within their limited sphere ,be taken into full confidence and the youth of India should be thoroughly trained to defend their health and home just as the children of
every free country claim to do. (Mookerjee, S. Educational Speeches, pp.73). He fervently prayed for national unity, as well as political and social justice. Political and social justice requires genuine freedom for self-fulfillment, in with all men, irrespective of caste and creed, may share. He envisaged that India was to fulfill her destiny and play her part worthily in the Commonwealth of Free Nation, then only Indians will be able to sweep away the cobwebs of mistrust and hatred amongst themselves.

Remembering Indian’s great heritage, he was quite aware, what future had in store. There were obvious limitations within which the Universities of a country such as India, had to function. So, the Universities should hold the torch of learning and make the students useful citizens and uphold the flag of Indian liberty. He urged the students to become physically strong and morally unbreakable, and instill in them the spirit of true democracy. The perennial truths of Indian religion, and philosophy had to be saved from the clutches of fear and superstition which dominate the popular mind. The rich and poor had to blend together, so that truth, justice, equality, that constitutes Indian’s great heritage may once again reign supreme.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee wanted to train the youths of India who in turn would heroically play a conspicuous part, not by mere surrender to emotions but tempered by a keen sense of practical wisdom and a thorough and efficient preparation, physical, moral and intellectual.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee, very positively felt that the India had suffered due to the want of education, because of the blunder made by the foreign rulers a century ago. Bentinck and Macaulay formulated their educational policy not for the welfare of the people, but for their own advancement. Education with its roots cut off and super imposed, was destined to be an ultimate failure. He very aptly noted that knowledge was actually imported to India at the sacrifice of our own cultural heritage. The sustaining force of western education in India was chiefly the glamour of State Service—it gave employment to run the bureaucratic machinery. But without freedom and complete control over our own destinies, we cannot
reshape our educational policy satisfactorily. Again, the acceptance of our national language as the medium of instruction and examination up to the highest level, is yet to be fulfilled. Regarding this, Syama Prasad was of the opinion that each province should use its own major language in its own region and educational sphere. If there is another major language in that same province, then it might be recognized, though too many languages may lead to obvious complication. Similarly, a working knowledge of Hindi was just essential, to keep the contact between provinces, running.

Apart from this, Syama Prasad Mookerjee observed that there should be no separate class of so called educated Indians, entirely cut-off from the mode of living of the vast million of less fortunate fellow countrymen. He vehemently claimed that instead of turning westwards, Indians could rebuild the society on their own respective model. In India, people follow multiple religions, and so they should adjust their activities, so as to give full scope for intellectual and cultural development; each remaining loyal to its creed, and also helpful and trustful to each other, and all owing allegiance to the spirit of Indian Union. Syama Prasad Mookerjee always stood for independent judgement, tolerance towards others’ opinion, with due respect.

Considering the post-war reconstruction of education, problems relating to languages, the needs of different communities, traditions and employment require the closest inspection. Also, the aim of education should ideally be very clear and precise. Syama Prasad Mookerjee went on to say that education can hardly be separated from the social and economic surroundings of the people. While those responsible for imparting education cannot guarantee employment to all students, the system should be so regulated that the training given is a help and not a hindrance to them in their struggle for existence.(Mookerjee, Syama Prasad,. Educational Speeches, pp. 81)

Dr. Mookerjee envisioned that University can well develop into a seat of learning, seeking harmonious and diverse elements of the inhabitants of this great land, and whose sons and daughters might assemble together to receive their training in
various branches of knowledge. He also felt the need of forming a University Grants Committee, serving not only the central, but also the State Universities. This committee, needed to have adequate funds at its disposal for distributions among the Universities in accordance with a planned and systematic development on a national basis. Again, Syama Prasad Mookerjee stressed that there should not be any conflict between primary, secondary and University stages, nor amongst literary, scientific, technical, vocational and agricultural course of study.

Regarding the question of language, Syama Prasad Mookerjee supported Hindi being accepted as the official language of India and that which should be learnt by all without any hesitation, acting as a powerful unifying force. He vehemently criticized the then present system of education.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee did not of course, overlook the need for girls’ education. He noticed that the number of girls enrolling for matriculation examination was steadily increasing, which was, of course, a welcome sign. He suggested that, a proper arrangement for their study had to be carefully considered.

He also stood for deprovincialisation of Government Arts colleges and schools. He stressed that there could exist both Government and Non-Government colleges.

Apart from all the above, Syama Prasad Mookerjee envisaged a very unique project—that of promoting military studies among the students population.

Lately, India had made a noteworthy progress in the domain of higher scientific study and research. Scholars, who had gone abroad for specialized training, had come back to render a national service. This was possible due to the far-sightedness of Sir Asutosh.

When Syama Prasad Mookerjee delivered a speech at the Scottish Church College, on 7th December, 1935, the researcher referred to the point, which Syama PrasadMookerjee stressed heavily upon—that is, the problem of unemployment. He pointed out that one school of thought urged a reduction in the number of educational institutions in order to tackle unemployment; and the other school
emphasized the need of institutions of a special kind, which may divert the student energy into varied channels.

We need to keep in mind that the percentage of University trained students in our country in relation to our population is still very low. With the development of electric power, broadcasting, cinema, the scientifically trained men make themselves useful to the society.

Likewise, Syama Prasad Mookerjee goes on to highlight the different positive aspects that western education has brought about. It has brought us in closer contact with civilization and culture of progressive countries other than ours. In fact, it has sowed the seeds of nationhood, awaken our national consciousness, broaden the intellectual horizon and help us in dreaming of a better and mightier India. Unfortunately, University education was introduced primarily for supply of agents for running the administration of a bureaucratic Government. They were not meant to be seats of learning, or intended to foster higher teaching and research, or to train leaders for a democratic country. First of all, there was the belief that if higher education was given extensively, it would itself become an instrument for the spread of primary education among the masses; but it did nevert materialize ultimately. In fact, we should deprecate any attempt to create a division among the different branches of education. Hence, it is required, that all branches of education should be advanced, and that too because it is a legitimate claim of all. This way, we might be able to build a complete edifice, a temple of learning with firm roots and a crown of glory reflecting India’s highest culture and civilization.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee opined aptly that it was important to bear in mind that a supply of trained youths, qualified in various scientific or technical lines, will just not solve the question of unemployment. So, opportunities were required to be created for absorbing the services of such young men, in trade, commerce and industry. So, there needed to be closer association between the state and the educational authorities on the one hand, and representatives of capitalists, of trade, industry and commerce on the other.
Dr. Mookerjee tread on another very sensitive issue. He felt that true education consists of spirit that is conveyed, than the instruction it imparts. He questioned, as to whether Indians were able to strengthen the sense of brotherhood amongst themselves, irrespective of caste, creed and community. He felt that educated men of the time, were victims of narrow provincialism and communal feelings. So long this environment of distrust and suspicious continues, the cherished goal of united India can never be achieved. It seems that education has failed to check the growth of bitter communal feuds and increasing inter-provincial ill-feeling. The teachers have the noble task of breaking down this separatist tendency among the students. The success of their teaching will be judged, not by the careers of the students, but by the quality of patriotism, self-sacrifice, freedom, courage, non-communalism and sectarian instincts which they instill. If the teacher in general, interpret their functions in a more catholic and spiritual way and inculcate upon our youths, the right relation between their province and community on the one hand and their motherland on the other, then they will be the true heirs of the great teachers of ancient India.

Last but not the least, Syama Prasad Mookerjee went on to say that there was a prevalent idea, that Indians are metaphysically minded and their contributions to positive science are insufficient, is not a valid and correct appreciation. In her great days, India had spread her culture and civilization far and wide. But of late, there has been as a long period of stagnation. But, at present, India has again started to contribute to world knowledge. Syama Prasad Mookerjee justifiably recalled that this University was the first in modern India to foster the pursuit of higher scientific knowledge on an organized scale, mainly with the help of Indian scholars, trained here and abroad. We owe this primarily to the vision and constructive ability of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, its Vice Chancellor. However, he did not forget the fact that the distinction between pure and applied science was becoming less and less defined, and a conscious collaboration is being fostered everywhere. Hence, the practical application of scientific knowledge to problems of agriculture and industry, nutrition and sanitation, was a matter of paramount
importance in a country where millions are yet sunk in poverty, disease and ignorance.

5.2 His Thought Process

The researcher, while studying Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s philosophy regarding the educational system of his very own country, realized his typical thought process. All his thinking and action revolved completely around the upliftment, enrichment and reorienting the education system of his country, that is, India. He put all his effort in running of the University, mainly, and other facts as well. He was aware, that his father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, expected a lot from him in this very field. When he got himself entangled in politics, it was because of a few education issues that he wanted to intervene in, so that the Hindus and Indians at large will not loose their right to education.

When Syama Prasad became the Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta, the first thing he realized was that, the quality of higher teaching will never improve, until and unless the collegiate education was developed. At the very beginning, he put his attention towards the Student Welfare Department. He thought that it would be a better option if the University, besides examining the patients, could deal with the preventive and curative side, as well.

He also was of the idea, that besides academics, games and sports were of immense importance. So, he went on to set up the University Rowing Club, as well as a playground for the University. The University Training Corps got the support of the University as well. He emphasized on the fact that an University Alumnus Fund needed to be set up, where old students of the University may contribute their share, large or small. As against this, the influence of the University in this democratic age cannot safely be limited to the period of youth, but must include organized effort for the education of adults, as well. Syama Prasad felt that it was the duty of the Indians to concentrate on constructive plans of reform and expansion in different fields of activity for the promotion of national prosperity that which will be compatible with true patriotism. So, inspired by a lofty idealism,
Indians shall be stirred to action if we remember that the future of Bengal, may of India,-lie today with the younger generation of her men and women that she will be only what they shall make her to be.

Syama Prasad very candidly expressed, “Standing in the very place which is sanctified by the memory of one of whom I cannot think without the deepest feelings of affection and reverence, to whom I owe my life and all, and to whom this university owes its greatness and, eminence, standing on this sacred spot, to me there is nothing nobler , nothing greater than to be afforded an opportunity of serving the truest interests of my Alma Mater and my country. With you I pray, and pray fervently, that the University may for ever be pledged to discover and disseminate truth in every realm to train men in openness of mind and love of truth and freedom, to inculcate right ideals, to develop personalities capable of the largest service to our beloved motherland.” (Mookerjee, S. Educational Speeches, pp.19)

Again, compared to other countries, India does not have the facility to educate people in varied types and arrange for the training of youths in diverse branches of knowledge, theoretical and practical. Infact the remedy for the present state would be to make provisions for similar kinds of instruction in our schools and colleges and not to complain against the number of students reading in them. The main ideal was to provide extensive facilities for education from the lowest grade to the highest, to unify their educational purpose and to train the youths intellectually, physically and morally. Syama Prasad Mookerjee wanted the University to be the home of liberty and progressive thought, generously assisted by the state and the public, where teachers and students will meet and work in an atmosphere of harmony and mutual understanding, where none will suffer on grounds of caste, sex, creed, and religious on political belief.

Another fact that he pointed out, was that the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction will not only raise the intellectual level of the people of this province but would also lead to the enrichment of Bengali literature.
With the corporate interest of the nation, it would be the paramount duty of the state and of men and organizations, capable of influencing the destiny, not to permit as much idealism, enthusiasm and trained skill to be wasted or turned into unproductive and undesired channels, but to take them up with boldness and sympathy and to employ them in diverse fields of activity, in order to bring in an era of peace, progress and prosperity.

He very rightfully observed that our foreign rulers were very short-sighted and there was no link between the various stages of education. But, actually the total system of education should have been a continuance. Again, education should always be life oriented, otherwise it becomes stagnant and soulless and instead of uplifting society, tends to relegate growth. It is desirable that India must produce her own band of discovers and conquerors of new realms of thought, and who in will help to raise the intellectual level of the country. In addition, the modern Indian scholar must have the training and also the vision to connect the present with the past. Syama Prasad always supported the ancient system regarding the relation between the teacher and the taught.

Another very significant point on which Syama Prasad Mookerjee threw light was the cost of education—he suggested that education at every stage should be as cheap as possible while its quality should be maintained at a high level.

Syama Prasad rightfully thought that for India to emerge in a new shape, University education could contribute to the progress towards a higher and nobler civilization. University can be the mouthpiece of national hopes and aspirations. Any University can conserve the bounds of knowledge; preserve the thought of a nation, breathing an atmosphere of freedom and truth. He wanted everybody to stand with a conviction that Indian Universities are bound to play a large part in the emergence of a new India; the proud inheritor of an ancient civilization, recognized with the changing requirements of the age. The Indian Universities should mould their activities in full remembrance of the fact that the progress of a nation can alone prevent degeneration, that there must be new life and purpose or else there will be weakness and destruction.
One another vital weakness about which Indians feel bad is that they have not been adequately trained to defend their own country. So, a thought needs to be given, regarding a national army and national navy, controlled completely by the Indians. He opined that no country has attained greatness or liberty except through loyalty and service of her children.

Next, the researcher thought how inter-college contact could deliver an improved service. He suggested that every college need not arrange for Honours courses in all subjects, that is, different colleges will have Honours in selected subjects. Such arrangement will not only benefit students but will also lead to a better utilization of existing sources and may lead to economy.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee went on to say that the University stood for the spread of education, as has thrown open it gates to all and sundry; it was then up to the people to proceed with boldness of vision and thereby take the task of moulding the character of the rising youths. He appealed to the Indians, so as to realize the vastness of the responsibility, viz, to educate public opinion in the right lines, to advise the University and Government in solving educational problems, the conflicting claims of literary and vocational education, state aid, teaching quality, examination, etc. He never forgot to give a thought on bringing about a healthy corporate life in the University. He also pressed the need of setting up student’s organization. Again, the University was attempting to achieve a definite contact between itself and the world of business, trade and commerce, which may serve as basis for future co-operation and understanding. He firmly believed that if all the principals of colleges, teachers, professors and students themselves co-operated and steadily continued to build health and character, unity and discipline among the youths studying in the colleges, then a new Bengal would be created with its head high and capable of responding to the call of the nation.

He came to the conclusion that there are three main roads along which a country can progress towards the best balance of intellect and character; the way of literary culture, the way of technical culture and the way of scientific culture. It has to be found out, which one is a prerogative in a country like India, and then will be
followed with the other cultures, as resources are always limited and typical to a country. He vehemently hoped that under the care of the college and University, and home, the youths will train themselves morally and physically, wherein they will widen their intellectual activities and capacities, develop perseverance, inculcate patriotism, and mould themselves into noble citizens of a united and regenerated India.

Besides all the above, Syama Prasad went on to dissect the significance of English language as well as the vernaculurs. On the one hand he said, that the vernaculars should be developed so as to give a rightful place in the scheme of national education; on the other hand, he admitted that our economic and political progress and cultural advance was closely bounded with western science and literature through medium of western language of course, specially English. So, reconciliation should be brought about between the two.

Indians should sternly resolve to honour men according to their quality and character, regardless of their sect, and to stamp our mind-set on noble thoughts, uninfluenced by the colour and creed of the thinker. He wished, that may the people of this country, be endowed with strength and courage to regard themselves as soldiers in the war of liberation of humanity, and thereby march towards the promised land of Swaraj of the intellect.

5.3 His Agenda for Action

Syama Prasad Mookerjee, from the very beginning, strived to bring about reconstruction in the system of education in India. But, all actions he tried to take, was truly guided by his own farsightedness, his philosophy and his thought process. His programmes that he undertook, was at its peak, when he become the Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta. At the young age of thirty three, he had to hold the reigns of the University, which was already under various and complex problems.

First of all, a radical change was brought about in the field of Secondary Education, wherein, as Syama Prasad stressed, that the mother tongue should be used as the
medium of instruction till the Matriculation Stage. Along with this, many elective subjects were brought in to facilitate the education of girls. He introduced alternative courses, where steps were taken to make education craft-centered. Another great task is Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s agenda was the preparation of books in Bengali and suitable equivalents for scientific and technical terms. For this, he appointed experts, who were engaged in collecting words and expressions to be used in textbooks.

Another great step he took was the completion of the fourth storey of the Asutosh Building, which housed the University General Library and post graduate Lending Library, with more accommodation.

He steadily supported the policy of sending the brilliant scholars to other countries for obtaining first hand knowledge. To adhere to the above agenda, finance was necessary. Syama Prasad Mookerjee tried to make the Government agree to increase the amount given to the University and college, so that the entire annual grant of Rs. 1,00,000, will be available.

He took steps to provide to a short course of study in University for training of teachers, as there was an urgent need of them.

Next he took the task of reorganizing the Biological Laboratories; the Department of Anthropology was shifted to Ballygunge campus. He also undertook the task of constructing a new building for the Department of Applied Chemistry, Applied Physics. The study of communication engineering was introduced in the Department of Physics. He took great interest in introducing the teaching of science at the Intermediate level as well.

Another important project that the Senate approved was the creation of a Fine Arts Gallery and Museum mainly for Post Graduate Studies.

The building for the University Rowing Club was completed, for the usage by the student community.
The task of publishing valuable books on various subjects, was very adequately taken up by him. Many Journals of scientific societies were published, with the view of dissemination of knowledge. The Teachers’ Training Department was being expanded to look after the needs of five hundred school teachers.

A new scheme for the establishment of an Appointment Board started working, with the initiative of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, in the University itself. As unemployment was rampant, he urged from the University that an Employment Bureau be established—not purely as a University body, but having representatives from the Government as well as from various commercial and industrial organizations.

At the time when the Central Advisory Board of Education was inaugurated by the Central Government, Syama Prasad Mookerjee put forward a united demand that Government should set apart a crore of rupees annually for several years in succession for distribution among the provinces, in proportion to what they themselves may demand, for the expenditure of primary and secondary education.

5.4 Conclusion

After studying in detail the philosophy of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the researcher feels that he ardently wanted the traditions of this country to be of pride to its countrymen. Of course, these traditions should be linked with the changing needs and aspirations of the society. He urged that nobody should hesitate to proclaim himself Indians first and anything else next. “Today, we stand at the cross-roads of history”, said Syama Prasad Mookerjee. So, he suggested that the gigantic task of reconstruction, cultural, social, economic and political could be rendered possible only through the co-ordinated efforts of trained and disciplined Indians. The policies made by Bentinck and Macaulay did not ever consider the welfare of the state.

So, after the independence, the Universities must be conscious of much wider conception of their duties and responsibilities than before. There was an urgent need for adequate leadership in professions, commerce and industry, in politics and
administration. A vast amount of natural resources as well as human resources lies hidden, awaiting to be tapped. According to Syama Prasad Mookerjee, a national system of education must conceive of a balanced structure when proper emphasis will be laid on all sections, so as to maintain harmony. The ideal will have to be reached by united effort and tireless work. Coming to Bengal, Syama Prasad pronounced that Bengal should again play her part in the remaking of India. She must produce a race of men and women, - strong in mind and body, true, resolute and self reliant, burning with patriotism and idealism, not carried away by emotions but capable of exercising critical and reasonable judgement. He wished that the name of the Motherland should be sounded in the clarion call of unity to one and all, Muslims and Christians, and others, alike. Everybody should bow their heads in the deepest loyalty and reverence to her unconquerable spirit and pledge themselves to her eternal welfare and prosperity.
References


“Men are of always rare in all countries through whom the aspiration of their people can hope to find its fulfilment, who have the thundering voice to say that what is needed shall be done.”

- Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee