Chapter – IX

CONCLUSION

1. Models of Educational Experiments

During the period under consideration, several models of educational experiments represented by the Wardha Scheme, National Council of Education, Visva-Bharati and Calcutta University were prevalent in Bengal. In the mid-1930's an American educationist toured in all the important countries of Asia, America and Europe and asked the following questions to the national leaders of those countries:

1. "Are you trying through education to perfect and perpetuate the existing social order of society?"
2. "Are you trying to create a new order of society which you clearly preconceive?" Or,
3. "Are you interested primarily in developing each individual as completely as possible in the hope that a generation of individuals so developed may be able to build a social order better than any that we, with the limitations of our education, can now conceive?"

The answers he received were as varied as they were interesting. Japan wanted to be more perfectly herself, Russia wanted to establish a new society, the British educationists were not

interested in using education to perpetuate status quo nor were they interested in any new kind of society. Gandhiji is reported to have said, "The primary aim of education is the development of character .... Let us have an education which will develop character and I do not care what social forms are used." The Chinese took a middle position between the Russian, the English and the Gandhian view. They said, "We want to develop every individual ... but we also want to give him certain ideals for the future society." Any scheme of national education in India must be judged by the test as to how far it prepared the people for attainment of ideals enshrined in the constructive programme of Mahatma Gandhi. Any plan of national education must aim at (a) improving existing conditions, even while we remain politically dependent and without power to employ the full resources of the State for the necessary changes, (b) providing for the requirements of rapid change as soon as political power comes into our hand. It is in this context that the models of the following educational experiments deserve consideration:

2. Wardha Scheme

The basis of Wardha scheme was set out in terms of the resolution passed at the Wardha National Education Conference in October 1937. The resolutions were as follows:

2 Ibid., p. 5.
4 Ibid., p. 46.

In this connection, see also Proceedings of All India Educational Conference, Fifteenth Session, Lucknow, 27 to 30 December 1939, Indian Annual Register, Vol. 2 (1939), pp. 422-26.
1. That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.

3. That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period, should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training to be integrally related to the central handicraft.

4. That the Conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

The Indian National Congress at its Haripura Session endorsed only the first three resolutions.

The Basic National Education for its success was dependent on control of the State. It was, in fact, introduced in certain provinces where Congress accepted office as Ministers. But it is surprising that the authors of the Wardha scheme did not discuss higher education and its connection with Universal Basic Education. Originally Mahatma Gandhi suggested that universities and technical institutions should be left to private enterprise. The reason given for this attitude towards higher education was that "those who want the luxury must pay for it and must not oblige the toiling and half-starved masses to foot the bill for them." In

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5 Ibid., p. 79.
actual practice, the Congress Ministers did not stop the grants to institutions for higher education. The Central Advisory Board of Education in Delhi appointed two committees in 1938 and 1939 to report on the Wardha education scheme. The findings and recommendations of these committees were mainly concerned with Primary and post-Primary and Secondary School education for students in the age group between six and fourteen.

Ever since its revival in 1935, the Central Advisory Board of Education engaged itself in examining the existing system of education in India. In the Post-War period when all the Governments in India decided to prepare plans for Post-War development, the Central Advisory Board of Education was called upon to prepare a general plan. Accordingly, the Board submitted a detailed report on Post-War Educational Development in India commonly known as the Sargent Report in 1944. This was perhaps the first official attempt to plan a national system of education in India and is, therefore, significant. The object of the plan was to create in India in a period of not less than forty years, the same standard of educational attainments as had already been admitted in England. With this end in view it provided for (a) Pre-Primary education for children between three and six; (b) Universal Compulsory and free Primary or Basic education for all children between the ages six and fourteen; (c) High school education for six years for selected children between the ages of eleven and seventeen; (d) University education including Post-Graduate and Research Faculties for selected students. It was difficult to fix a quantitative standard, but the plan contemplated that when the High School system would start functioning as proposed, about one pupil in every fifteen would be found fit to proceed to
University; (e) Technical, Commercial and Art education. The amount, type and location of such education would be determined by the requirements of industry and commerce; (f) The liquidation of adult literacy and the development of public library system in about twenty years; (g) Full provision for the proper training of teachers required for the implementation and continuation of the scheme; (h) The organisation of compulsory physical education, medical inspection followed by after treatment, and provision of milk and mid-day meals for undernourished children; (i) The creation of employment bureaus; (j) Special schools for children suffering from mental and physical handicaps; (k) Social and recreational activities on a fairly liberal scale; (l) An administrative system which would place initiative and authority in the hands of those who understand and care about education.

As is apparent from the provisions of the Report, the preoccupation of this plan was with Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary education. Regarding University education, the Report summarised its recommendations thus:

Indian Universities, as they exist today, despite many admirable features do not fully satisfy the requirements of a national system of education. In order to raise standards all round, the conditions of admission must be revised with the object of ensuring that all students are capable of taking full advantage of a University course. The proposed

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6 The Indian Annual Register, Vol.I (1944), p. 312.
reorganisation of the High School system will facilitate this. Adequate financial assistance must be provided for poor students. The present Intermediate Course should be abolished. Ultimately the whole of this course should be covered in the High School, but as an immediate step the first year of the course should be transferred to High School and the second to Universities. The minimum length of a University course should be three years (in certain subjects longer). The tutorial system should be widely extended and closer personal contacts established between teachers and students. The importance of establishing a high standard in Post-Graduate studies and particularly in pure and applied research should be emphasized. Steps should be taken to improve the conditions of service, including remuneration of University and College Teachers where those now in operation are attracting men and women of the requisite calibre.

The idea of a prescribed goal that was to be reached within a specific time by the adoption of well co-ordinate programme, though new to the educational system of India, was appreciated. But hardly had the first steps been taken for its implementation, India became independent on 15 August 1947. This put an end to this plan.

3. National Council of Education

The movement for National Education as manifest in 1905 was essentially an expression of Bengal’s militant nationalism which had been gaining ground since the middle of the nineteenth century. The existing British system of education proved no guarantee against economic disruption and, still more, failed to solve the bread problem. The objects of the Bengal National Council of Education were stated in the Memorandum of the Association. Gooroodas Banerjee inaugurated the National Council of Education, Bengal on 15 August 1906 in a meeting held under

8 Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, A Phase of the Swadeshi Movement (National Education) 1905-1910 (Calcutta: Chuckerverty, Chatterjee & Co. Ltd., 1953), pp. 9-12.
the presidency of Rash Behary Ghose. The objects of this Association were stated thus:

1. To impart Education, Literary and Scientific as well as Technical and Professional, on lines and exclusively under national control not in opposition to, but standing apart from the existing system of Primary, Secondary and Collegiate Education, attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its literature, history and philosophy and designed to incorporate with the best oriental ideals of life and thought the best assimilable ideals of the West;

2. To promote the study chiefly of such branches of the arts and sciences as are best calculated to develop the material resources of the country and satisfy its pressing wants;

3. To provide for denominational religious education subject to certain conditions;

4. To create and maintain a high standard of proficiency and to enforce strict discipline in accordance with the best traditions of the country;

5. To impart and facilitate the imparting of education ordinarily through the medium of the vernaculars and for that purpose to prepare and encourage the preparation of suitable text books in the vernacular in arts and sciences;
6. To create and maintain a high standard of qualification, intellectual as well as moral, in teachers and found and maintain professorships and fellowships, and

7. To provide and arrange for meetings and conferences to promote and advance the cause of education.

The National Council intended to set up a national university where subjects like literature, history and philosophical subjects like psychology, ethics, would be taught. Scientific subjects would include mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology while technical subjects would deal with practical application of knowledge and also professional learning like medicine. It envisaged schemes for Primary, Secondary and Collegiate education. The Applied Science and Technical Departments of the Bengal National College were gradually amalgamated with the Bengal Technical Institute in 1910. Mathematics and Biology continued to be taught at the Bengal National College (later named as Bengal National Academy). In August 1910

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the Council, with a view to enhancing the efficiency of teaching by highly trained staff, sent seven scholars to the United States for higher training. This was rendered possible by the exertions of Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radha Kumud Mukherjee who raised a donation of Rs. 30,000 for the purpose. In 1911 grants were made out of funds donated by T. Palit to students studying abroad with the said purpose.

The courses of study, too, underwent revision in 1911, and a two years' proficiency course was instituted. In the next year, the Government appointed a committee to consider the question of establishing a Technological Institute in Calcutta and proposed that the Bengal Technical Institute should be handed over to the Government. While this proposal found supporters in Nilratan Sircar, T. Palit and a few others, the majority were opposed to the same. Palit withdrew his monthly subscription from April 1912 and the Council faced some trouble. But after some time they were able to secure a long lease of a house off Canal East Road in Maniktala. In spite of these, the number of students steadily declined and it had to be closed in 1917.

In December 1920 Gopal Chandra Sinha of Calcutta offered to place at the disposal of the Council the proceeds of rupees one lakh. This was to be utilised for the promotion of agricultural education. The Council accepted the offer in May 1921. The Council, however, failed to receive any money from the endowment till 1926. In the meantime they made an attempt to secure one hundred bighas of land adjoining the Council's land at Jadavpur
from the Corporation of Calcutta and also a grant from the District Board of 24-Parganas. The Corporation sanctioned the proposed land on condition that construction of building for agricultural education should start within three years.

The Council sought the permission of the Corporation to use half of the area of the agricultural land for the general purposes of the College of Engineering and Technology. In September 1933 the Corporation agreed to do this on condition that the agricultural classes would start not later than 31 March 1935. Classes started from July 1935 with eleven students on its rolls. This number increased to seventeen by the next year. This course continued till 1953.

The most valuable contribution of the Council, perhaps, was the achievement in the field of technical education. Though the Government had viewed with suspicion this technical institute which had a nationalist origin, character and management, yet the dearth of trained technical personnel and equipment in the country made the Government turned to them for help whenever necessary. Students who had completed their studies at this institution were also offered Government services. In 1917 the Government even borrowed some valuable machinery from the Institute for manufacture of munitions. In 1918 the Council made attempts at reconstruction, and a Reconstruction Committee was appointed to make certain recommendations on this matter. The Committee recommended that funds permitting extension of work should be utilised in the direction of commercial and industrial
education. Secondly, they would try to train young men to organise simple home industries on national lines in accordance with economical and improved methods. Thirdly, in order to liberalise technical education the Committee suggested that the students should be induced to attend lectures of general, humane and enduring interest regularly. Fourthly, the Committee proposed that Commercial Economics, History and General Geography, together with English, should form a part of the instruction to be followed in the Technical Institute. Fifthly, they suggested that instructions should follow the vernacular medium though non-Bengali students would be free to join it. Finally, they pointed out that any fund which would be available from the general studies, would be utilised for the improvement of the Technical Institute, if only for a temporary period.

These recommendations were accepted, and from 1918 onwards the resources of the Council were channelised for the development of technical education. The increase in roll strength was satisfactory between 1910 to 1920. In 1910 the roll strength was 114 which rose to 150 in 1919 and to 247 in 1920. The Non-Cooperation Movement led to an influx of students seeking admission in this College, as many students who had boycotted the colleges under the Calcutta University now joined this College. In February 1921 a new section had to be opened in order to accommodate the newcomers. In July 1921 there were 3000 applicants for admission, but only 467 could be admitted as facilities were inadequate for that number. On 31 December 1921 there were 632 students on the rolls and a new course of Chemical Engineering was opened at the approval of Sir P.C. Ray, the Rector.
On 11 March 1922 Asutosh Choudhuri, the President of the Council, laid the foundation stone of the Main Building at Jadavpur, and in 1924 the Institute moved to the new premises. In order to counteract the difficulty of securing competent teachers, especially for Engineering subjects, three teachers were sent to Germany for higher training. On their return, the standard of teaching definitely improved in the Institute. In 1925 the University of Edinburgh granted recognition to the Bengal Technical Institute on their own accord. This was definitely a breakthrough for the Council in the light of official indifference which they continuously faced in India. From July 1930 onwards the Senior Engineering course was extended to five years. The Junior Technical Course in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering developed into three years' course. Besides, there was also a two years' course of Survey and Draftsmanship. In 1928 the Bengal Technical Institute was renamed as the College of Engineering and Technology, Bengal. In 1929 a generous American citizen awarded $2000 for the education of two scholars.

Throughout the period, the Council was handicapped by financial constraints. The College was in the charge of the Superintendent of the Council who was responsible for the administration and management of the affairs of the College. It was felt that a system of rotation of office might improve the efficiency of administration. This principle was to be initiated from January 1940. But the students construed this decision as a lack of confidence in the existing Superintendent. In protest they went on strike and the College had to be closed.
from 9 May for an indefinite period. In July 1939 a Special Committee was appointed to make a general survey of the affairs of the College and Council and to submit their recommendations. The Committee recommended in 1941 that the syllabus and duration of the Engineering Course should be reduced to four years and admission restricted to students who passed the I.Sc. Examinations. They proposed the appointment of a Principal for the College in place of the Superintendent.

In 1941 a centre for training of war technicians was opened in the College, and in the next year a Manufacturing Department in the College Workshop was opened. It was thought that this would give the students a practical demonstration of the commercial side of the workshops while being a source of income to the Council. Lathes, shaping machines and other tools were manufactured and sold by this Department, but it was abolished during 1947-48 as it had eventually turned out to be an unproductive venture. In 1944 the degrees of Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering (B.M.E.), Bachelor of Electrical Engineering (B.E.E.) and Bachelor of Chemical Engineering (B.Ch.E.) were introduced by the Council in place of diplomas. In 1945 the Government of Bengal appointed a Committee for the improvement of engineering education in the province and in 1946, the Government decided to help the development of the Chemical Engineering Department of the College with both capital and recurring grants. The College now approached the Central Government as well for grants and hoped that it would aid the development of Higher Technological Institutes. Although the Government of India decided to set up separate Higher Technological Institutes and
not to upgrade any of the existing ones, yet it sanctioned grants for the further development of the College which had been recognised as an all India institution. With national independence came the recognition of the Degrees conferred by the Council on the part of the Union Public Service Commission, State Governments, Calcutta University and certain other authorities. The Jadavpur University established in 1955 was a successful finale to the struggle initiated by the National Council of Education almost four decades ago.\(^\text{11}\) Benoy Sarkar argued that "the national education ideologies of 1905 grew in the womb of the state-directed educational system. It is as a critic of and a protestant against the University of Calcutta that Gooroodas Banerjee functioned in the ripeness of time while co-operating with the other founders of the National Council of Education."\(^\text{12}\)

Susobhan Sarkar analysed the contributions of the Bengal National Council of Education in his speech delivered on the occasion of the Foundation Day Ceremony of the said institution in 1975. Sarkar tried to draw our attention to the legacy of this organisation in respect of its fivefold ideals enunciated on 11 March 1906. The fivefold ideals were National Control, National Content, Technological, Scientific bias, vernacular medium and mass education, but these ideals, like many other ideals of Swadeshi movement, had vanished into oblivion. As to the specific causes that had brought about this fiasco, Sarkar pointed out that the degree awarded by the National Council was definitely an important factor, as such degree had very little

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp. 20-39.

utility in the employment market. True, that the degree of Technical Education did have some value in the job market, yet that was due more to the absence of any similar degree from the Calcutta University. But here, too, disappointment was unavoidable as the Swadeshi movement had failed to develop large-scale industrialisation which alone could have provided employment for the educated unemployed. National education with its negligible job prospects failed to attract the bulk of the student community or to get any colleges affiliated to it.

Susobhan Sarkar pointed out that the big non-Government colleges of Bengal failed to respond to the idealistic call of the National Council of Education. It belied the expectation of the National Council that colleges would find a rallying point in the Council. A huge student community, which such colleges mobilised, thus remained outside the portals of the National Council of Education.

As a contrast, the University of Calcutta, under the extraordinary leadership of Asutosh Mookerjee, was transformed into a centre for higher studies, advancement of learning being its motto. Strangely enough, Mookerjee was never associated with or influenced by the programme of the Council. His only concern was radical restructuring of the University of Calcutta. Under Asutosh Mookerjee's influence, modern Indian languages were incorporated in the programme of higher studies and the syllabus of history modified, extended and made research-oriented. The munificence of Palit and Ghose paved the way for the establishment of Science College which again promoted multifarious

research schemes. Eminent scholars and professors from different parts of the country and abroad adorned the most prestigious Chairs of the University of Calcutta. Asutosh's strong hand could loosen the fetters of official control over the University. There is little wonder that this impregnable structure could withstand the massive wave of Non-Cooperation Movement.

Susobhan Sarkar suggested that the Council had started losing its vitality and appeal even before 1910. He reminded the most scathing criticism launched by the old revolutionary leader Hemchandra Kanungo in this respect. The latter observed that the National Education programme had hardly anything new to offer. Nor could it respond to the real requirements of the country. To a large extent, it clung to the imitation of an established system indulging in an unnecessary glorification of a past that was dead and barren. Though purported to uphold the vernacular medium of instruction, the Council neglected it from the outset almost completely. These loopholes explain partly why the National Council of Education though started with a bang ended in a whimper. On the other hand, the significant role of the University of Calcutta in the overall educational canvas of the country became glaringly manifest, as years rolled by.

4. **Visva-Bharati**

Yet another bold experiment trying to impart higher education in Bengal may be discerned in the 'Visva-Bharati' which was inaugurated in 1922 by the poet and philosopher
Rabindranath Tagore. Like the ancient seers of India, he sought to build up an outlook in which comprehensiveness and a feeling for the whole, would be reconciled with a proper appreciation of the value and dignity of the individual. Deeply influenced by the Vedic conception of a cosmic harmony he insisted that education should "develop in the student the capacity to be natural with nature and human with society. It must combine the introspective vision of the Universal soul with the spirit of its outward expression in service." He


17 Ibid., pp. 243-44.
declared that the mission of all education would be to lead beyond the present and achieve a point of view which would include the past and the future as integral parts of the present. With Gandhi, Tagore shared the common concern for education aiming at the total development of human personality. He was against formal education and advocated holistic education. Education in the midst of Nature as envisaged in the ancient Indian ideal of "Tapovana", no doubt fascinated Tagore, but he did not lose sight of the scientific — technological innovations of the West and felt that pragmatic and utilitarian education of the West should be grafted on the ancient conception of education which would ensure an overall development of personality.

Tagore declared that the educational institutions in India should not only be the centres of her intellectual life, but also cater to her economic needs. They must produce all the necessities of life, devising the best means, using the best materials and calling science to their aid. Not only this, they should cooperate with the villages around them and help to improve the standard of the economic life of the villagers.

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Critical of the existing system of education Tagore observed in his message to the New Education Fellowship Conference held in Calcutta on 29 December 1937, "Today our few Universities are like oases in the heart of a vast desert of illiteracy, whose gifts are for a few, producing a language and a mental diet that remain foreign to the multitude." Tagore urged that Indians would have to assimilate different trends of knowledge without sacrificing their own, just as different people have different diets suited to their soil, climate and taste, though the principle of nutrition remains one. Pointing out the contradictions of the existing system of education, he said, "As soon as the idea of a University enters our mind, the idea of a Cambridge University, Oxford University and a host of other European Universities, rushes in at the same time and fills the whole space. We then imagine that our salvation lies in an electric perfection. We forget that the European Universities are living organs, parts of the life of Europe where each found its natural birth. Patching up noses and other small missing fractions of our features with skins from foreign limbs is allowed in modern surgery; but to build up a whole man by piercing together foreign fragments is beyond the resources of science not only for the present time, but let us fervently hope for all time to come." Speaking in the same breath at the Calcutta University Convocation held on 17 February 1937, he remarked, "Our Universities, poorly equipped, scantily respected, lacking encouragement - has been plying monotonously

like little ferry boats carrying their handful of students over the meagre subjects set for their examinations. These universities of ours have touched no more than the outermost fringe of the great mind, and even that contact is of the lightest, bereft, as it is, of all vitality in passing through its foreign covering. Wherefore, far behind the other Eastern nations in which the call to awake has been heard, lags India in regard to self-respect awakened in the light of self-knowledge. In his highly philosophical and instructive address to the students of the Punjab Students' Conference held on 15 February 1935 at Lahore he insisted that the students should follow the message "know thyself" and try to lift the people submerged in degradation and not display foreign feathers, however, gorgeous they may be. In the Benares Hindu University Convocation, he reiterated that the noble function of education was to reconcile the human mind with the world of nature through perfect knowledge and enjoyment.

Tagore was no mere visionary contented with an idea. He was eager to test the validity of an ideal in a concrete shape. Condemning the Indian universities as caricatures of foreign models, he set up his own to prove that education could be Indian without being parochial, universal without being imitative. From its inception, however, the finances of the Visva-Bharati posed a perennial problem for the idealistic poet. He had put all his money into it but it was never enough.

22 The Indian Annual Register, Vol.I (1937), pp. 400-01.
The breaking point seemed to have arrived perhaps during the closing years of his life, when the old poet had to go round the world begging for a little dough. He himself described in a dejected mood, "I am moving from place to place, a beggar's bowl in my hand. It will be better to say, having round my neck. I am not an expert in this art, nor am I pleased with it. My days are far from happy. In my tired moments Visva-Bharati seems a mirage. An idea is living, but it cannot be preserved in the iron safe of an institution. It is lucky if it finds a place in the hearts of men." Towards the middle of 1933, Visva-Bharati faced one of its worst financial crises.

A visibly shaken Tagore readily accepted invitations from Bombay, Andhra and Ceylon in the hope that his appeal on behalf of this institution would gain a favourable footing in those places. The story of his bitter disappointment was best reflected by a few public documents and private correspondence.

On 2 December 1933, speaking at a reception given by the Indian Merchants Chamber, he made a fervent appeal, "If you acknowledge me as a great post, you should also see that my mission in life should be a success ... I have not been able to realise the ideal of an Eastern University fully because I have not received sufficient response from my countrymen." His visit to Ceylon had the same melancholy experience. There, too, in a reception on 10 May 1934 he lamented his countrymen's indifference to the cause of Visva-Bharati. Despite his best endeavours, he

26 Ibid., p. 296.
could raise only rupees seven hundred or so out of these meetings. Though some more dripped in later, yet it could not be adequate for the cause.

In the meantime, as Visva-Bharati's problems became insurmountable, Andrews advised Tagore to take the help of Gandhiji. A desperate Tagore wrote to Gandhi on 12 September 1935:

"... Over thirty years I have practically given my all to this mission of my life and so long as I was comparatively young and active I faced all my difficulties unaided and through my struggles the institution grew up (in) its manifold aspects. And now, however, when I am 75, I feel the burden of my responsibility growing too heavy for me. ... Constant begging excursions with absurdly meagre results added to the strain of my daily anxieties and have brought my physical constitution nearly to an extreme verge of exhaustion. Now I know of none else but yourself whose words may help my countrymen to realise that it is their worthwhile to maintain this institution in fullness of its functions and to relieve me of perpetual worry at this last period of my waning life and health.

Gandhiji assured Tagore that he would strain every nerve to find the required money! Towards the beginning of December, Gandhi, however, fell seriously ill and was advised complete rest. In the meantime, the deficit of Visva-Bharati had mounted to the extent of Rs. 60,000 which was naturally a terrible cause for concern to the poet. However, the successful staging of the dance drama 'Chitrangada' in Calcutta spelt new optimism for Tagore. He decided to take it round the cultural centres and cities of India. He reached Delhi on 23 March 1936, and acquainted Gandhi with the financial constraints of Visva-Bharati and the worries which it had brought. Gandhi promised to help him, though in that case, the poet would have to cancel his engagements.

28 Ibid., p. 243.
Gandhi sent a cheque for Rs. 60,000 at long last for the Visva-Bharati though the donor wished to remain anonymous. For the time being the crisis was averted and the poet felt that in his absence, the Mahatma would look after the welfare of the Visva-Bharati. He then decided to appoint Gandhi as one of its trustees. Gandhi, however, politely regretted on 19 March 1937 his inability to accept the poet's offer.

In spite of a temporary misunderstanding between Tagore and Gandhiji, the latter sent a cheque for Rs. 13,000 to the Visva-Bharati on 5 November 1937. Time and again Gandhi came to the rescue of this institution when things went wrong. When Tagore passed away in 1941 Gandhi did his bit. In 1951, an Act of Parliament gave Visva-Bharati the status of a Central University.

The Visva-Bharati had been plagued with financial crisis right from its inception. Mrinalini Debi had to sell all her ornaments in order to save Santineketan from the impending disaster. In 1922 Tagore had to assign to Visva-Bharati the copyright of all his Bengali publications. By 1923 Visva-Bharati Publishing House had been established at Calcutta and the publication of the collected works of Tagore started in 1939. The publication of booklets in 'Loksiksha' series and 'Visvavidya' series commenced subsequently. It should be noted, in this context, that all these publications contributed a major share to the financial sustenance of Visva-Bharati. No doubt that the income from these sources were still meagre and could not meet the financial requirements of Visva-Bharati adequately.

If this was the state of finances in the Visva-Bharati, its administration fared no better. Nemai Sadhan Bose, a former Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, lamented that even during the days of Tagore, Visva-Bharati had started faltering and even failed to live up to the educational ideals of Tagore. Tagore himself was painfully aware of the shortcomings of his brainchild. As early as 1934 (Pous 1341 B.S.) Tagore himself admitted that despite his overpowering presence and benign influence various types of conflicts and inconsistencies had steadily made their way into the activities of Santiniketan. In 1940. In 1940 (Sravan 1347) while addressing a prayer meeting at Santiniketan, where teachers, students and workers of Santiniketan and Sriniketan as well as the residents of the locality had assembled, Tagore struck a more despondent note publicly admitting that all concerned were equally responsible for the erosion of values of the Visva-Bharati. On 18 April 1935, he complained to Rathindranath Tagore that most of the teachers at Santiniketan were young and immature lacking in profound devotion to its ideals. Tagore remarked that the "seriousness" in the character of Jagadananda, Nepalbabu and Kalimohon could leave a deep impression on the minds of their students, but the present generation of teachers lacked "seriousness". Thus they failed to contribute in any way to the development of this institution.31 As early as 1919 (Asar 1326 B.S.) Tagore observed that the badge of slavery was deeply

imprinted on the official educational system of India, and it was this drawback which stood in the way of proper development of this unique institution. In spite of this criticism, Tagore was aware of the financial support which Visva-Bharati received, though it might appear inconsistent to the ideal at Visva-Bharati. When the Visva-Bharati became a Central University in 1951, the ideals and structure of the old were altered to make room for a new one - quite different from the old.

Even before the birth of Visva-Bharati, Tagore had been reluctant to introduce College-type formal official education in Santiniketan. He sought to introduce a novel educational experiment instead known as the 'Brahmacharya Ashram' where the students were expected to observe a life of strict discipline. But even then, Tagore himself was very much aware that his directives were honoured more in breach than in observance. On 8 April 1935, he expressed to Rathindranath his agony that Santiniketan was passing through dire mismanagement. 32

He particularly mentioned the moral degradation that was prevailing in Santiniketan. In the thirties, the depressed poet expressed in agony, "What a sin have I committed? Visva-Bharati? At every stage I now feel I have transformed truth into falsehood. How terrible is the burden of falsehood!" 33 Tagore, in fact, was quite conscious of the problems of Visva-Bharati which were both institutional and human. Ironically, the deterioration in human relations started in Visva-Bharati even when Tagore was there, as a friend, philosopher and guide. 34

32 All of us are now apprehensive of mismanagement that pervades Santiniketan. The ethical environment of this place is not healthy at all (tr. mine). Desh, 21 July, 1990.
33 Desh, 3 November, 1990, p. 10.
Though Tagore was not oblivious of the need of employment oriented education, and had established Loksiksha which was to be a basis of his universal education, the fact remains that Visva-Bharati had never been successful in this field. Explaining some of the reasons for this failure, Asoke Rudra said that it was rooted in a number of factors such as geographical, social etc. Rudra argued that since its birth, the infrastructure of Visva-Bharati had never changed much. While it had an adequate environment for cultivation of higher studies, it failed to implement employment-oriented education which must have deterred its progress.35

5. The University of Calcutta: A Debate

Under the Indian University Act of 1904, Alexander Pedler became the Vice-Chancellor of the University, but he failed to come to an agreement with the Senate regarding the new regulations. When he retired in March 1906, Asutosh Mookerjee was invited to assume this responsibility. His tenure of office for four consecutive terms, spread over a period of eight years from 1906 to 1914, commenced a new era in the history of higher education in Bengal. The proposal to appoint Asutosh Mookerjee as Vice-Chancellor was initiated by H.H. Risley, who was then the Home Secretary. Risley's note gives us an idea how the official mind was working. It runs as follows:36

I have no hesitation in saying that the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Mookerjee is marked out by his Scientific attainments, his long connection with the University and the work he has done for it and by his official position as conspicuously qualified for the post of Vice-Chancellor. The appointment of a distinguished Indian as Vice-Chancellor would undoubtedly be popular and would tend in some degree to discourage the idea that the sole purpose of the Universities Act was to tighten official control over the Universities. But apart from this it is essential while the complicated process of framing the regulations is going forward that the Vice-Chancellor should be someone who has a thorough knowledge of the past history of the University and of the intricate discussions which have taken place regarding the regulations during the last year. No one else possesses this knowledge and I can think of no one else who is competent to carry out the difficult task of framing a compact and consistent body of University regulations .... Finally I may mention that it is an advantage for the Vice-Chancellor to be judge of the High Court since the political faction in the Senate is composed mainly of pleaders and they are amenable to a judge before whom they have to appear in Court than to an executive official.

Surendranath Banerjea, an elected member of the reconstituted Senate, too, spoke in the same vein. 37

His long familiarity with the Calcutta University, his wide grasp of educational problems and his extraordinary capacity for dealing with them, made Sir Asutosh the most commanding figure in the University. During the time he was Vice-Chancellor, he ruled a supreme sway; and it is but right to say that he enforced the regulations with a measure of discretion, a regard for all interests that partly allayed the suspicion and anxiety they had created in the mind of the educated community in Bengal .... University teaching in the higher departments made a great stride during his Vice-Chancellorship .... He was a unique figure in the educational world of Bengal and it will be difficult to fill his place.

Between 1914 and 1921, Asutosh Mookerjee bent all his energies for the creation of the Post-Graduate Department, controlled its activities and devoted his super-abundant energies

37 Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta, p. 182; See also, S.N. Banerjea, A Nation in Making. (Calcutta, 1925 rpt. 1963), pp. 181-82.
to the furtherance of research and the encouragement of scholar­ships.\(^{38}\) He aptly explained, "A University designed for the service of a nation in all possible phases of development cannot be restricted to a narrow or chosen teaching. It cannot be treated either as a great scholastic sanctuary or as a glorified teaching institute."\(^{39}\)

The expansion of the Post-Graduate Department was vast. This becomes evident when we find that in the year 1920-21 there were twenty-three Professors and Lecturers in the Ancient Indian History and Culture Department alone. Likewise in the Department of English there were twenty-one Professors and Lecturers. So also in the Department of Indian Vernaculars there were twenty-five Professors and Lecturers. The subjects taught were as follows: English, Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic and Persian, Comparative Philology, Philosophy, Experimental Psychology, General History, Ancient Indian History and Culture, Anthropology, Economics, Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Modern Languages, French, Tibetan, Poverty Problems, Indian Vernaculars, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Botany, Physiology, Zoology — altogether twenty-four subjects. The output of the research work of the University Professors and Lecturers was also very praiseworthy. The University owned a press and some of the volumes were published by the University itself. The results of such research work appeared in the journals of the learned societies of England. The Calcutta

\(^{38}\) N.K. Sinha, op.cit., p. 110.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 123.
University also published a *Journal of Letters* which contained a good portion of the research work of the teachers. The range of subjects investigated by the University Professors and Lecturers was vast. In 1922 Asutosh expressed in his Convocation Address, "It is further incumbent upon the University to convey to the community in popular, quite as much as in permanent form, the products of the highest thought on current problems of science and society, of government and public order, of knowledge and conduct." The Department of Indian Vernaculars constituted the chief glory of the University - "For the first time in the history of Indian Universities, it became possible for a person to take the highest University degree on the basis of his knowledge of his mother tongue." The style of functioning of the University of Calcutta and the system of University reform as initiated by Asutosh evoked serious opprobrium from Jadunath Sarkar, the renowned historian. Jadunath Sarkar referred to the 'slave mentality' which had become ingrained with the teachers of Calcutta University. Illustrating his point, Sarkar alleged:

Mr Rama Prasad Chand has been openly preaching that the Calcutta University can do no good unless Sir Asutosh Mookerji is made its 'dictator' and that in order to do this good work every board and other academic bodies must have a majority of members whose votes would be 'in the clutches of his hand.' I cannot presume to say whether this picture of the intelligence and character of the teachers of the Calcutta University is true or merely the fantasy of a Bhakta's imagination.

41 Ibid., p. 22.
43 Ibid., p. 3.
Sarkar pointed out that the element of 'Kaiser worshipping' at the Calcutta University was borne out by the writings of Chanda and the newspaper reports on the same issue. Sarkar complained that there was no regular scale of pay or increment at the Calcutta University regardless of personality. Nor was there any fixed principle "for the payment of overtimes or extras to the happy holders of pluralities." Secondly, many appointments were for a year only and were liable to be terminated at the end of each year without any suitable cause. "No length of services, no efficiency of work can convert these annual tenants at will into occupancy ryots. Favouratism of widest variations are found in the salaries paid to new recruits." Sarkar complained that the fact that the University was "yielding to personal considerations in individual cases instead of maintaining the reign of impersonal immutable law" accounted for its declining character.

Explaining the causes of Calcutta University's financial distress, Sarkar argued that there was always a "manipulation of things behind the screen; this spirit of getting things done by a dictator's intervention instead of by set rules and legally constituted and publicly responsible organs - in short, this continuation of war emergency legislation and summary procedure in normal peace time - has been the impending bankruptcy of the Calcutta University." Sarkar added, "A University
does not add to its reputation if it constantly sits by the road side, exposing its sores, and whining for public charity. Even a poor man can command public esteem if he lives within his means and follows common sense business methods.  

The *Modern Review* reprimanded: "What notice are the Government going to take of the conduct of the man or superman who has brought things to such a scandalous pass? The Hon'ble Minister for Education made an angry speech in the Council the other day, but is that all that he is prepared to do? What steps has he taken or does he propose to take to cleanse the Augean stables?" It was argued that the University could not blame the Government alone for this plight.

The Board of Accounts, which was expected to keep a watch or control over University expenditure, had ceased to function effectively. It had fallen under the guidance of Asutosh Mookerjee and had supposedly framed a body of rules by which the Senate could not move a step without the authority or concurrence of the Board of Accounts. However, such rules were never formally adopted by the Senate. This irregularity was striking since Asutosh Mookerjee himself had proposed to act in accordance with such instructions. "The University authorities have been deliberately playing a game of bluff and now that it is no longer possible to hide the consequences of the thoughtless action, they come forward with the beggar's bowl whining and groaning as if they were the victim of some unforeseen calamity."

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49 Ibid., p. 754.
The Times Educational Supplement of 22 April 1922 too focussed the same issue. It wrote: 50

These truths, we are sure, are not denied by men of position and influence who severely criticise the working of the Post-Graduate department. But their complaint is that under his (Sir Asutosh's) dominating influence the Senate has allowed an imperium in imperia to be built up and to be an excessive drain upon the University resources, so that it cripples the ordinary work. They also hold that the aggrandisement of the department has become an obsession with its distinguished head (that is to say Sir Asutosh) and that a Geddes axe should be applied to its administration.

The farewell speech of Lord Ronaldshay, while judicious in tone, shows that these criticisms are not altogether baseless. He admitted that in a poor country there are obvious limits to the extent to which post-graduate studies can reasonably be financed by public funds. He suggested for the consideration of the Senate the question whether it is bound to provide post-graduate teaching in every subject in which it is prepared to examine and confer awards or whether following the precedent set by such Universities as Oxford in this country, it should not expect students of very special subjects to take their own arrangements for the greater part of their studies.

Jadunath Sarkar tried to analyse the causes of Calcutta University's financial crunch with the aim of educating public opinion on the state of affairs in the Calcutta University. 51 Sarkar was optimistic because the better type of Indian teachers working in the Post-Graduate Department of the Calcutta University were themselves "sick of the sham and servility that reigns there at present", 52 though their precarious position and minority status had prevented them from rising against the evils

50 "Megalomania in the Calcutta University Post-Graduate Department", The Times Educational Supplement, 22 April 1922, p. 188.
52 Ibid., p. 462.
publicly. Sarkar indicated the means by which the University could put its house in order. Quoting Michael Sadler's speech in Leeds (October 1921) Sarkar argued that in India a disproportionate attention had been paid towards University education. While primary education was extremely backward and worse still was secondary and girls' education, quite a large number of students took the degree course. Sarkar deplored the boundless expansion of the Post-Graduate classes and the rapid creation of new departments and finally their infinite subdivision into branches. Instead of limiting each particular university to some special field of research, Asutosh, he alleged, was pursuing a reckless spirit of "doing everything".

Identifying the causes of the University's discomfiture, Sarkar argued that Asutosh's monstrous assumption was that if the University could recognise certain subdivisions of a subject as possible courses of study for the M.A. degree, it became imperative that the University would also have to provide lecturers for all the alternative branches even if a single student offered for such subjects. In this manner the number of University staff had multiplied as subjects had increased though students had been found wanting. This involved wastage and the Bengal tax-payer was expected to finance this prodigal expansion.

Sarkar suggested some possible remedies. The first item of reform was to enforce a common sense financial system on the megalomaniacs of the Calcutta University and insist on a strict public audit and publication of the details of its income and expenditure. It was impossible to estimate the
demoralising effect (on students and teachers alike) of its repeated public lamentations of impending bankruptcy (no double intended to melt the hearts of the M.L.C.'s) its curtailment of salaries without curtailing its bloated staff, its appeals for 'patriotic contributions' of a quarter of each professor's income (in the manner of the Jacobins), its keeping salaries and examiners' fees in arrears long after work done. The needless multiplication of teachers was not only financially distressing but also a grave academic evil. He suggested that in order to give the teachers a decent amount of occupation, it was necessary not to increase the number of lectures on each paper but to substitute courses of guided self-training in library and laboratory.

Next, he suggested that the "rank tropical growth of 'branches and subdivisions' in the Post-Graduate department should be reduced to orderly form and common sense dimensions, and the staff should be made to give good value for the money spent on them." 53 Sarkar was of the opinion that the legal practitioners employed in University teaching were often unable to attend their classes as they had to attend to their Law Courts as a priority measure. But this arrangement, no doubt, involved wastage. The University could support this system in the name of research. For it was hoped that if a number of brilliant graduates were captured when they had taken their M.A. degrees, they would in their comparative learned leisure (ensured by their billets in the Post-Graduate department) devote themselves to research for their own betterment.

53 Ibid., p. 464.
Sarkar earnestly felt that in a poor country like India, such 'idle Fellowships' would be a liability. Moreover, "the busy High Court half-timer or Police Court practitioner can, by no stretch of ingenuity, be described as a researcher in esse or in posse." "If the real motive in keeping this overgrown lightly worked Post-Graduate staff is the promotion of research, then it logically follows that those who do no research at all but merely take classes like ordinary College Lecturers and those who do scissors and gum bottle research should be rigorously weeded out." But, unfortunately, this was never done in Calcutta.

On the academic side, Sarkar pointed out that the most urgent problem was how to arrest the steady lowering of values. The remedy suggested by him was the enforcement of absolute anonymity of the examinees and the secrecy as regards the names of the examiners. Sarkar felt that the statutory inclusion of adequate proportion of external examiners of known character and repute to safeguard the outside estimation of Calcutta degrees would help in this matter.

The fierce campaign of calumny against the Calcutta University did not go unchallenged. In 1922 an anonymous gentleman energetically defended the claims of the Calcutta University. He refuted the allegation that University funds had been misapplied or misappropriated. He remarked:

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54 Ibid., p. 465.
55 Ibid., p. 465.
What is the sum and substance of the charge - that the University has spent more upon education than its precarious income justified? Assuming that this is established, then what is the significance? The University has done its duty manfully through advancement of learning notwithstanding the apathy and hostility of those who could have, but have not, befriended the cause of higher education. There have been no instances of fictitious travelling allowances and imaginary halting charges. Vice-Chancellor after Vice-Chancellor has worked strenuously - no remuneration, no allowances, not a Personal Assistant, not even a Confidential Stenographer. Truly we live in an extraordinary world when work of this description is labelled in this country.

In 1925 Tripurari Chakravarti, a renowned teacher in the Department of History, Calcutta University, took up the pen in an attempt to initiate a stout defence of the University against the calumnies of Modern Review and accusations of Jadunath Sarkar. The latter had contributed a series of articles criticising the Calcutta University in the Modern Review. Chakravarti wrote, "The Teaching University of Calcutta, it seems, has fallen on evil days and evil tongues. Professor Jadunath Sarkar of Patna fame, the redoubtable champion of 'efficiency, retrenchment and Reform' in the University Education of Bengal, followed no doubt by several members of the Kartabhaja and Maharaja Sects is again on the war-path." 57

Chakravarti criticised Jadu Nath Sarkar when the latter warned the Government against making any grants to the unreformed and unrepentent University which, according to him, had issued a defiant challenge to the public legislature by

refusing any reforms and demanding more money. Sarkar who, according to Chakravarti, had "developed a great love for the Bengali tax-payer and the Indian masses, "had failed to realise" that the Government of Bengal could not refuse financial assistance to an institution whose affairs were solely managed by a Senate which again was constituted mainly of Government nominees. The Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University was not a paid but an honorary official and was 'the fittest and proper person nominated by the Local Government of Bengal'. So going against such a person would be an injustice.

The allegation, that the needless addition of new departments and new branches of subjects of instruction had led to a waste of public money, was also refuted by Chakravarti. He pointed out, "The importance of subjects undertaken for Post-Graduate study and research in this University has never been considered to be absolutely dependent upon the number of students that those studies may attract." He cautioned that if Sarkar's ideas were implemented then it would destroy the character of the University as an oriental seat of learning. Chakravarti reminded that compared to the Universities of Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, the Calcutta University still lagged behind in the subjects of study. Even the Calcutta University Commission had recognised the extremely limited character of the branches of study in the University and had advocated further development in the said field. It had stressed that at least twenty-seven new departments

58 Ibid., p. 488.
required to be established and that if funds permitted, they should start teaching as well. Chakravarti quoted the following lines of the Calcutta University Commission in order to suggest that the latter had welcomed the growth of the Post-
Graduate Department — "The remarkable expansion of Post-
Graduate Teaching and the new standard of method in University Teaching under the direct auspices of the University is calculated to inspire solid hopes for the future."59

Chakravarti pointed out that Sarkar's undue concern over a huge array of young lecturers without enough teaching work could not be substantiated. He felt that Sarkar's arguments were based on a narrow and erroneous conception of the scope and functions of higher teaching in a modern and progressive University as in Europe or America. Sarkar had miserably failed to realise that in University education "the most important thing is not the number of lectures that a teacher can deliver per week, but the capacity and fitness of a teacher to undertake the teaching in a particular branch of a highly specialised subject. The cause of higher education in a country is not certainly promoted by such baleful spirit of commerce as seeks to judge education by the maxims of the counter."60 The Modern Review and its eminent contributor Jadunath Sarkar, had opened up a campaign against the University. "India needs new and better Universities and a better educational system. This can be secured through the enlightened patriotism

59 Ibid., pp. 490-91.
See also, Calcutta University Commission Report, Vol.1, p. 76.
60 Ibid., pp. 492-93.
of the people, particularly of the rich, who can better afford to spend regularly at least a part of their income for the cause of national education." 61 In another place, it quoted with approval an extract from the Times advocating retrenchment. The Modern Review emphasised, "In their work of stabilisation and development of the Post-Graduate organisation, the question of how much money will be spent is of no importance compared to the more vital question of selecting the people on whom the money will be spent." 62 One of the most stinging allegations made by the Modern Review against the defenders of the Calcutta University was that they had been discreetly silent where their criticism was unanswerable and had answered those charges where their opponents were deficient. The defenders of the Calcutta University thus decided to answer some of the charges levelled against them.

As to the charge that The Calcutta Review published serial stories and other kinds of light literature and commonplace popular illustrations as its main features, the defenders of the Calcutta University pointed out that the editorial staff and the contributors to this journal were all honorary. Moreover, The Calcutta Review was not at all a burden on the University, but rather an asset as it had helped the University to reduce its deficit considerably by widely advertising the University publications. 63

62 Ibid., p. 324.
63 Ibid., p. 327.
Answering Jadunath Sarkar's charge that there was a steady lowering of the standard of examination in the Calcutta University, the defendants reminded Sarkar that the Calcutta University graduates had accounted for fifty per cent of the I.C.S. posts by competitive examination and had secured uniformly good results in the Finance Examinations, not to speak of Police service where they had also fared well. They argued that the value of a Degree should never be ascertained by the percentage of passes.64 The Calcutta Review fully concurred with the following statement of the Modern Review, "It is not desirable that the Government should be allowed to come into the field of the University management nor is it fair that the Government should allow the University to be controlled by vested interests and cliques. It is necessary that the Government pay for the advancement of learning; but they should see that things are done properly. We are not suggesting official management of the University. The scholars of the nation should control the University, but in this kingdom of scholars there must be democracy and not oligarchy or tyranny."65

6. The Colonial Legacy

The pattern of higher education as prevalent in India today is only hundred and forty years old. It was ushered in by the Education Despatch of 1854. "Under British rule, Indian Universities grew up in isolation from the historically evolved

64 Ibid., p. 329.
65 Ibid., p. 330.
An unnatural mixture of moribund tradition and spurious modernity was concocted in the crucible of colonist India. Many of the functional attributes of the system of higher education during the colonial period still persist. Some of the crucial inadequacies of the present system are the consequences of this persistance. In order to comprehend the viability of this research, it is necessary to identify some of the salient features of the colonial systems of higher education. First, it was quantitatively meagre. At the end of the British rule enrolment in research per one lakh of population was 0.14; in Post-Graduate Courses 2.31; Under-Graduate streams 14.87; Engineering & Technology 1.84; Teachers' Training Course 0.88; Agriculture 1.07; Law 2.16; Commerce 4.19; Medicine 2.83. Out of every one lakh persons only 30.31 were enrolled for higher education.

Secondly, higher education in colonial India developed in response to the needs of alien administration rather than to those of socio-economic development. The system was expected to produce educated cogs and wheels for the administrative machinery. A report of 1947-48 is a sad commentary on the state of affairs. In that year 13.82 per cent had opted for Commerce, 8.35 per cent for Medicine, 7.14 per cent for Law, 6.07 per cent for Engineering, 2.91 per cent for Teaching, 0.76 per cent for Veterinary courses, 0.24 per cent for Forestry studies and 57.16 per cent for general subjects. It

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67 Ibid.
is clear from this statistics that 4.54 per cent of enrolment was linked with primary, 6.7 per cent with secondary sector and the rest was geared to tertiary sector. Post-Graduate and Research work constituted only a small share in the total enrolment, that is to say, 11.5 per cent for the former and 0.83 per cent for the latter. The higher education was concentrated largely at the undergraduate level which was structurally delinked from the rest of higher education by the existence of affiliated degree colleges. Moonis Raza writes, "The continuum of higher education was thus fractured." Higher education in colonial India was mainly concentrated in and around the port cities with an extremely narrow socio-economic base. Vast majority of people, particularly members of the Scheduled Caste and Tribes and women did not get access to it. The total enrolment of women was as low as 1.24 per cent in 1916-17 and reached the apex at 9.35 per cent on the eve of independence. Moonis Raza suggests, "The crisis of Indian higher education is rooted in certain inherited structural deformities and inadequacies. India does need less of the same kind and more of a different kind of higher education. The situation calls for strengthening of its total segments spreading out to uncovered areas and improvement in quality." Amartya Sen has drawn our attention to the thorny questions of educational policy and manpower planning. He has noticed that the development of higher education in India since the colonial period had been unplanned. He has advocated that

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
there should be some concentrated planning of system related
to the manpower needs of the nation. It would be argued that
manpower needs should not be the only basis of planning. Again
it may be asked whether educational policies should be at all
restricted given the fact that there is a very large demand
for it. This argument would have been very compelling if the
demand for higher education was not based on massive subsidies.
This is the reason why the necessity of relating educational
opportunities to India's manpower needs could not be easily
ignored. Sen is firmly of opinion that in India the require­
ment of University educated manpower has been overestimated and
the necessary speed of expansion of primary education has been
under-estimated. "And as a consequence it indicates a man­
power policy which is neither economically efficient nor
oriented towards creating a just society in this country."70
The argument of Sen, though more appropriate in the context of
management and administration of education in contemporary India,
is also valid when considered in the context of that in colonial
India. In fact the entire education system during the period
of our investigation suffered from the ills of adhocism.

The organisation of universities involves, inter alia,
two elements: teachers and students. What distinguishes
university from other institutions is the active participation
of teachers and students together in pursuit of a common endeavour.
Once this concept of university is accepted all other elements
become subsidiary to the essential needs of the community of

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70 Amartya Kumar Sen, "Manpower Planning - I" and "Manpower
Planning - II", The Statesman, 18 April 1967 and 19 April 1967
respectively.
scholars. The institutions of higher education in India particularly universities and colleges were examination oriented. Smooth conduct of examinations and necessary administrative apparatus for this purpose were the main justifications for the survival of the institutions of higher education. As Amrik Singh points out, "In short the tradition of Indian Universities has been one of administration-orientation, rather than one of teacher orientation." 71 This colonial legacy persists till now. Educational administration is different from other forms of organisations in two important aspects. First, education is a continuing process. A large part of total resources invested in education is committed in advance as consequences of decisions taken long ago or in recent past. Secondly, the net of educational activities are widespread covering considerable number of institutions, each with its own characteristics. "The intricate and delicate human processes involved make the task of decision-making extremely difficult so far as reform of education is concerned." 72 Needless to say, during our period of investigation the organisation of higher education was not well equipped with appropriately trained modern managers. The application of the concepts and methodologies of system analysis and of integrated long-range planning was lacking.

The concept of planning and development of higher education has been elaborately discussed by Harbison in


in *Manpower Aspects of Educational Planning* (UNESCO). He has pointed out three clear distinctions of this problem:

1. Manpower requirements as identifiable needs for persons with particular training and experience;
2. A country's ability to provide useful employment for persons with certain educational qualification;
3. Demand for education in consequence of social and political pressures for various kinds of education.

Such a programme of development and improvement requires micro-level planning. No such micro-level survey and planning were noticed in the colonial period. No doubt two types of cost, non-recurring and recurring, were taken into account in cases of Government grants, but the rationale of this division either in the University Budget or in the Government grant was not clearly discernable. "What is, however, most significantly lacking in the planning process, is the stipulation of goals. The groves of the academy become murky when nobody knows exactly for what purpose the students are in the University or in the College. Is it for contribution to knowledge? Or for the preservation of culture? Or for socio-economic development? If the last be of utmost importance, the strategy for planning has to be quite different from what would be relevant if the first objective were to be pursued."73

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The aims of higher education constantly require a redefinition. Attempts at redefinition demand reconsideration of some important issues, such as:

Who shall be educated in institutions of higher learning? If a policy of selective admissions is adopted, how is opportunity to be equalized for the weaker and less privileged sections of the society? How is secondary education to be articulated with higher education to rationalize pressure of numbers on the latter? What should be the role of the affiliated colleges vis-à-vis the Universities, especially in respect of post-graduate work and research? What should be the level of financing support to the Universities and Colleges in terms of per capita cost and a proportion of the G.N.P. to ensure realization of specific objectives of higher education? What measures can be adopted to ensure quality if the Universities have to make do with existing levels of support? How is the University system to coordinate, maintain and improve standards in the context of the explosion of knowledge and at the same time face the revolution of rising expectations and the explosion of numbers?

These questions are as valid today as they were in the colonial period. The only difference is that in the post-colonial period educational administrators have formulated the aims of education in these precise terms. But in the colonial period problems were in many respects identical though not clearly defined as a realistic basis for a programme of action.

The major problem of higher education in India was the ambivalent approach of the governors and clientele of educational organisations. In the second half of the nineteenth century the present system of higher education got stabilised. The traditional elite looked on the system as the means of getting into

the governmental establishment. The majority of them nurtured the idea that the universities did not give them real education. The system exhibited very little of responsiveness to the problems and changes in society. There were few points of meeting ground between the societal changes and the educational changes. "But the intellectuals of the country who held common membership in both the systems (viz. the University and the society) assumed parallel and often conflicting roles in the two systems, inevitably resulting in ambivalence that characterises them." 75

The concept that the universities should be autonomous institutions is a product of nineteenth century liberal European tradition that was imposed on the Indian system. It is worthwhile to examine the working of the university autonomy in terms of the support that it got from the structural linkages of the system. The relationship between the funding agency, namely, the Government and the higher participants of the University, namely, the Vice-Chancellor, the Syndicate, the Senate and the Academic Council, is determined by considerations which are not always necessarily academic. The mode of appointment of the Vice-Chancellor was an interesting mechanism that permitted non-academic constraints on the working of the university autonomy. The university bodies like the Syndicate, Senate, etc. had a certain percentage of members elected from what was known as Graduate constituencies. These elected representatives on many

occasions functioned as non-academic power groups within the university system. These linkages sometimes rendered the autonomous function of the universities ineffective. 76

Considering all these Amrik Singh argues that the system of higher education handed down by the colonial rulers has totally collapsed. "The problems of higher education in our country today are more non-educational than educational in character." 77

The challenge of higher education during the period under investigation was who should be educated and where. Most of the centres of higher education were in urban areas. The socio-economic situation in the country was not reflected in the universities and colleges. The quest for equality in educational opportunities of the Moslems, Scheduled Castes and girl students remained largely futile. 78 The institutions of higher education did not develop link with the ordinary life of the people. "Not enough notice has been taken of the problems raised by the social and natural environment in which we live." 79

S.C. Dube has characterised the system of higher education in India as an "immobile colossus". 80 The colonial Government was not altogether oblivious of the disastrous consequences of

76 Ibid., pp. 68-69.
the immobility of the system of higher education. It was widely recognized that the progress and prosperity of any nation was dependent on the efficiency with which it could educate and train its individual citizens. On the occasion of the Krishnagar College Centenary celebration in 1946, W.A. Jenkins, Director of Organisation, Method and Accommodation, Bengal wrote.

In India the whole problem of the part that Government should play in educational development has been complicated and rendered difficult of solution by the fact that Government has not been the accepted Government of the people by large and influential sections of the public. The result has been that whenever any proposals to make education a responsibility of the prevailing Government have been put forward there has been aroused an unfortunate but natural opposition to the increasing of Government control even though such increase may have meant greatly improved educational facilities. This opposition has been largely political in origin and not educational.

The fact that no nation was satisfied with its educational machinery and was ever trying to modernise it was a proof of the increasing part that it was playing in national life. Jenkins advocated increasing role of Government in matters of educational administration and management. "In India it must be recognized and the sooner the better, that whatever Government be in power, whether it be a foreign or an indigenous one, the provision of education is not a secondary issue but is one of the fundamental responsibilities upon the efficient discharge of which depends the prosperity of the country and the efficiency of the carrying out of its projects."


82 Ibid., p. 4.

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