Chapter 2

ANNIE BESANT
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With the historical perspective as discussed in the preceding chapter, we may now assess the contributions of those who have made the emergence of the Banaras Hindu University possible. Foremost among them was Mrs Annie Besant. Though the name of Banaras Hindu University was invariably associated with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, we must not forget that it was Besant who had conceived the idea of a Hindu University at Banaras first and played a significant and decisive role in the story of the emergence of the University prior to Malaviya.

FORMATIVE YEARS

Mrs Besant dreamt of founding a new university when in 1884 she could not get a degree at the University of London. Before her marriage she received private schooling comprising almost all the common subjects from Miss Ellen Marryat "a lame lady with a

1 Miss Marryat was a spinster, the sister of Captain Marryat, a renowned novelist. Her influence on Annie’s life was penetrating and far-reaching. Her method of study was quite different from the traditional system. She did not encourage much cramming and parrot-learning, but advocated learning by heart. She asked the children to narrate what they had seen in their daily life. In education later Mrs Besant always advocated this method of learning. She expressed her gratitude when she said "No words of mine, can tell how much I owe her, not only of knowledge - but that of knowledge which has remained with me ever since as a constant spur to study". For details see, Annie Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 34-53; Theodore Besterman, Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet, pp. 19-20.
strong face", but with a soft and sympathetic heart. Miss Marryat suggested to her mother, Mrs Wood, that she would take care of Annie's education along with her motherless niece. Annie's mother reluctantly yielded on the ground, Mrs Annie Besant explained in her Autobiography, "...that the advantages of education offered were such as no money could purchase for me,...". In the summer of 1862 Mrs Annie Besant's educational task under Miss Marryat was over. Annie wrote in her Autobiography:

My emancipation from the school room was but the starting point of more eager study, though now the study turned into the lines of thought towards which my personal tendencies most attracted me.... (5)

College education at that age was not encouraged for a young woman. Annie also did not aspire for it. After coming back to her mother from Miss Marryat's guidance, she spent her days in a very literary atmosphere with special emphasis on literature, philosophy, theology, languages and music. At the age of twenty, she was married to Rev. Frank Besant, "an ill-matched pair". Annie narrated in her Autobiography:

My dreamy life, into which no knowledge of evil had been allowed to penetrate, in which I had been guarded from all pain, shielded from all anxiety, kept innocent on all questions of sex, was no preparation for married existence, and left me defenceless to face a rude awakening.... (6)

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2 Annie Besant, An Autobiography, p. 34.
3 Mrs Wood was an ideal mother. For details see W.T. Stead, Annie Besant: A Character Sketch, pp. 8-13.
5 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
6 Ibid., pp. 70-71.
The unhappy married life of Mrs Annie Besant started from its very beginning. It worsened day by day. She could find no charm in domestic matters and kept herself busy in writing short stories for the Family Herald. Her first earning of thirty shillings was a symbol of independence which thrilled her most and added to her confidence. At this period she came into contact of Charles Voysey and Thomas Scott, and started writing pamphlets which

7 The Family Herald was of "purely domestic interest". It had one peculiarity, which helped the poor writers, was that, it paid its contributor when it accepted the paper, even before printing.

8 Before her separation Mrs Besant went to London to her mother for a short holiday after illness in 1872 and met for the first time Charles Voysey and Thomas Scott. Charles Voysey (1828-1912), an Oxonian, was a Vicar of a Yorkshire village. He was tried for heresy and deprived of his living because of his atheistic views in sermons and in his writing which shocked the orthodox, conservative, established Church of England. Mrs Annie Besant was greatly influenced by Voysey to be an atheist. See A.H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, pp. 45-46; Annie Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 203-6; G.M. Williams, The Passionate Pilgrim, pp. 34-35; Concise Dictionary of National Biography, 1901-1950, Part II, p. 448.

9 Mrs Besant was introduced to Mr Scott (1808-1878) by Charles Voysey and Mrs Besant's first "Free Thought Pamphlet" was written under his suggestion and published. Thomas Scott was a wealthy and influential man of experiences. He had spent an adventurous life first in the French Court of Charles X, then with Indians in North America. His experiences and travelling over most of the world gifted him with an extraordinary power of judgement and courage to spread truth and liberty by free distribution of pamphlets. His house in South London was a centre of liberal opinion. For details see G.M. Williams, The Passionate Pilgrim, p. 35; Geoffrey West, Mrs Annie Besant, p. 27; Theodore Besterman, A Modern Prophet, p. 48; The Concise Dictionary of National Biography, 1901-1950, Part II, p. 1169; A.H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, pp. 59-60; Annie Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 113-14.
expressed her doubt in religion. Frank Besant was annoyed and this led to angry dissension between the husband and the wife. Annie described herself as: "...accustomed to freedom, indifferent to home details, impulsive, very hot tempered and proud as Lucifer"; and Frank Besant, as a person "with very high ideas of a husband's authority and a wife's submissions;...thinking much of the details of home arrangements, precise, methodical, easily angered with difficulty appeased". Annie always revolted against conditions imposed upon her. Rebell ing against her marriage and against the denial of woman's independence, she left her husband and the secured life at home and started the life full of thorns. Mrs Wood, her mother, was passing at that time through a humiliated life with her son Henry. Mrs Annie Besant did not trouble her more. After spending for weeks in London in an American friend's house, she became a governess in a country vicarage. Suddenly she was informed that her mother was seriously ill. She left the job with the small savings she already had and came to London. She arranged a new house and brought her mother there only to breathe her last. Mrs Annie Besant, who had a strong affection for her mother was severely schocked and left helpless. In this critical period she met Charles Bradlaugh whom she referred as "the noblest friend that woman ever had". Mrs Annie


11 Ibid.

12 Mr Moncure Conway, Annie Besant met him at Mr. Scott's place. She translated German legends for his book.

Besant learnt from Charles Bradlaugh that 'an atheist questioned but did not dogmatically deny the existence of God. She was deeply impressed by his physique and intellect and became a member of the National Secularist Society, started writing for the National Reformer under the pen name "Ajax" and also began to deliver speeches publicly and later on regularly in the 'Hall of Science'.

Charles Bradlaugh, a notorious infidel, the president of the National Secularist Party and editor of National Reformer played a leading role in Mrs Annie Besant's life. They had a strong resemblance in their lives and character which drew them closer. Both of them were abnormally pre-occupied with religion in their adolescences. Both of them annoyed the established church for their scepticism which resulted in revolt against it and escaped to atheism and led a life full of struggles.

Charles Bradlaugh had a tremendous affection for Mrs Annie Besant - protected and consoled her most in her troubled days which made his daughters Alice and Hypatia "jealous". Annie stated in her Autobiography that "from that first meeting in the Hall of Science dated a friendship that lasted unbroken till death severed the earthly bond...." Mrs Bonner, Bradlaugh's daughter writes: "Having enrolled herself a member of the National Secularist Society, Mrs Besant sought Mr Bradlaugh's acquaintance. They were mutually attracted and a friendship sprang up between them of so close a nature that, had both been free, it would undoubtedly have ended in marriage".

Bradlaugh was interested in India. He came to India to attend the sessions of the Indian National Congress in Lahore in December 1889. He was called in Parliament "the Member for India". He advocated for India in Parliament and demanded with Mrs Besant, self government for India. Dwarka Das Kanji remarked in his book India's Fight for Freedom, p. 8 that "If his party had been in power at that time, Bradlaugh might well have been the Secretary of State for India".

After the tragic episode which proved Mrs Annie Besant, to quote a Brighton Town Councillor, "an animal", Mrs Annie Besant fell sick. She lost the custody of her son and after some time Mabel who was in her custody was also taken away from her by her husband. As Bradlaugh commented later:

To compensate her for the enforced loneliness of her home, Mrs Besant's ever-restless mind from 1877 until 1890 has so constantly sought additional toil, that it is wonderful that she survived the incessant struggle. (17)

Annie decided to engage herself to a greater cause and essentially to be self-educated. In January 1878 London University offered the opportunity for women for obtaining degrees. Mrs Besant took the challenge and started a fresh educational career. In February 1879 Bradlaugh announced in his magazine National Reformer: "Mrs Besant, thinking that it may add to her usefulness to the cause, intends to try to take the advantage of the

This refers to her separation from her daughter Mabel. After Mrs Besant's separation from her husband in 1873, she was given the custody of her daughter, Mabel and her husband, their son, Arthur Digby. But Mrs Besant's atheism, her writings for Knowlton Pamphlet (Dr Charles Knowlton's treaties on Malthusian Theory of Family Limitation) in support of a small family, her association with Charles Bradlaugh, were grounds on which her husband, Rev. Frank Besant filed a petition to the court to recover his daughter, Mabel, from his heretic wife. The judge passed a verdict against Mrs Besant and lost the right of a mother over her dear Mabel. This separation she always referred as "the most agonizing experience" of her life.

The Town Councillor remarked that "such an animal as Mrs Besant would not be allowed to use the Town Hall". G.M. Williams, The Passionate Pilgrim, p. 96.

Quoted in Mrs Annie Besant, Charles Bradlaugh: A Character Sketch, p. 5.
opportunity afforded for women obtaining degrees in the London University. The necessary studies in preparation for the severe examinations will occupy so much of her time that for months to come she will be able to lecture only on Saturday and Sunday...."

Thus her formal education began. She "resolved to fill up the gaps in her scientific education". Through J.H. Levy, she was introduced to Dr Aveling and became his pupil. Her object was to matriculate in June at the London University which was duly accomplished. Bradlaugh proudly announced: "...Mrs Besant is now an under-graduate at the London University.... We may now, without breaking any confidence, say that Mrs Besant intends to win a science degree...."


20 A political economist with an advanced religious and political views. Ibid., p. 148.

21 Dr B. Aveling was a teacher in comparative anatomy at the London Hospital and also a teacher of science at King's College, London University. Annie was deeply impressed by his talents and personality. She wrote in her Autobiography "...a marvellously able teacher of scientific subjects, the very ablest in fact, that I ever met. He was an ideal teacher". Dr Aveling became a member of the Free Thinker and National Secularist Party. A romantic relation developed between them. G.M. Williams in his Passionate Pilgrim thus observed: "Frank Besant had to catch his train. Bradlaugh's tributes were of a rugged brevity. The tempestuous, extravagant adoration of the Aveling School gives off a heady bouquet. But ultimately the relation did not survive. See G.M. Williams, The Passionate Pilgrim, pp. 109-48; and A.H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant (1960 edition), pp. 147-212.

22 A.H. Nethercot, op. cit., p. 152.
Soon after Dr Aveling having officially joined the National Secular Society, he lost his post in the university. To provide him, classes started at the Hall of Science and both Dr Aveling and Mrs Besant started teaching. The latter got the certificate as a Science Teacher in eight different sciences. From the South Kensington branch of the university she was the only winner of the honours award in Botany in England.

Mrs Besant and Alice Bradlaugh, the daughter of Charles Bradlaugh sought the permission to use the Royal Botanical Gardens in Regent's Park for their further studies but this was denied by the Curator because his daughter sometimes used the gardens. It was due to the generosity of Sir J.D. Hooker, a famous botanist, she was admitted to the Kew Gardens only before the public visiting hours. Again her attempt was baulked when her name, from the list of its successful students at the South Kensington examination was dropped by the Birkbeck Institute where she had attended a class in electricity. Later, she came to know that the members of the Committee who were collecting money for a building fund feared that some of their contributors would withdraw if they realized she had been allowed to attend one of its classes. Mrs Besant protested through the press by printing and distributing a circular on the matter, and found most of the press on her side.

By December 1881, the Education Department officially accepted Bradlaugh's daughters as authorized teachers but Mrs Besant's name had been withdrawn by the same Board only with the intention of not harming the career of Bradlaugh's daughters.

In May 1883 Mrs Besant and Alice Bradlaugh applied for admission into a practical botany class at University College.
But they were again refused. Explaining the refusal, Annie remarked "I for my sins and she only for being her father's daughter,..." They were told by the Lady Superintendent that "there was some prejudice against them." They circulated a petition to the Council to summon an extraordinary meeting to reconsider its action. An extraordinary meeting was invited. The University College Senate supported the Council's stand and the Jurists' verdict went against them. The Council voted against Mrs Besant and Miss Bradlaugh. "So frowned their mighty combatants that hell grew darker at their frown". Mrs Besant challenged the opponents and expressed her feeling to Dr Aveling saying, "They have probably made it impossible for me to take my degree this year, but they have not the power to shut me altogether". She still decided to get the degree from the London University itself, a more "liberal institution".

She passed her first B.Sc and preliminary science examinations with no trouble, but in practical chemistry, despite her genuine attempt, she failed thrice. She was puzzled at her unsucces and could not make out the reasons. Annie wrote:

Personally, I found that this study and teaching together with attendance at classes held for

25 Milton's Paradise Lost quoted in C. Anand, 3,000 Quotations p. 56.
26 Quoted in A.H. Nethercot, op. cit., p. 182.
27 Ibid.
teachers at South Kensington, the study for passing for First B.Sc and Prel. Sc. Examinations at London University, and the study for the B.Sc. degree at London, at which I failed in practical chemistry three times—a thing that puzzled me not a little at the time, as I had first a far more difficult practical chemical examination for teachers at South Kensington.... (28)

Then a reason flashed in her mind. She remembered that "there was one examiner in the University who told her before hand that however brilliantly she might do the paper which were set, he would not pass her, because he had a strong antipathy towards her atheism and to certain of her activities for the masses, which he considered immoral". She could not get the degree because as a woman she dared to revolt against the established order and hoisted the flag of liberty—a wonder at this age.

Undaunted by the hostility of the conservative and crude world, rejected by the orthodox academic circle, she probably resolved that she must found a university which should be above all prejudices, pettiness and narrowness—a symbol of unity, liberty and fraternity. "Defeat is a school in which truth always grows strong". Mrs Besant's varied, spectacular life which is stranger than any fiction was ultimately directed to the end only to prove that Atheism was rather in the lip than in the heart of Annie. Leading different roles in her life as a prime victorian girl, a rebelling wife, a trouped mother, a free thinker, a

30 H.W. Beecher quoted in C. Anand, 3,000 Quotations, p. 70.
radical agitator, a feminist, a crusador for birth control, author, editor, publisher, a convert to Fabian socialism, a teacher of science, a rejected student, a leader of the striker, a trade unionist, a social reformer, Mrs Annie Besant, a lady of liberty, "a woman of swift decisions" who only changed her views to quest the truth was tired, desolate and frustrated. At last "she had after many explorations found her path and came to see the universe and herself in their real perspective”. In the quest of truth she harbourised the idea by the spring of 1889 that there was some hidden thing, some mysterious power and she determined to explore that power and finally on 10 May 1889 Mrs Besant with eyes full of tears surrendered to Madame Blavatsky. She begged: "Will you accept me as your pupil and give me the honour of proclaiming you my teacher in the face of the world?" And Mother Blavatsky answered with her hands on the head of Annie - a searcher of truth - "you are a noble woman. May Master bless you". She was formally admitted on 21 May 1889.

The disbelief in God could be only a dimming cloud which blew away for ever. Madame Blavatsky told Annie that "a religion of the East was rather better than the religion of the West". Annie the disciple of Charles Bradlaugh, an atheist was well

31 Bernard Shaw, "Mrs Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism", in Annie Besant Centenary Volume, p. 17.
32 Ibid., p. 24.
34 Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 344.
35 Annie Besant, "The Work of the Theosophical Society", in For India's Uplift, p. 213.
acknowledged about the oriental creeds - Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism and tried to find out the common resemblances. A great significant coincidence in her life was that the first lecture of Charles Bradlaugh which impressed her deeply was based on Eastern religion - Hinduism. Ultimately religion brought her to India and turned her - a lover of Hinduism. The Hindu College which she founded later could no longer remain a distant dream. But first her theosophy.

II

BIRTH OF A HINDU THEOSOPHIST

The Theosophist Society consisted of different students belonging to any religion in the world or to none. Their principle of unity is not for the profession of a common faith but for a common search to reach the goal of truth. If this is the basic principle of theosophy, Mrs Annie Besant's sacrifice for the upliftment of Hinduism could not be explained. She did not go back to her old faith of Christianity. She embraced and championed the cause of Hinduism, repeatedly emphasising its superiority to other religions. She knew fully well that "Theosophy is the body of Truths which forms the basis of all religions which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any". As C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar observes:

36 The lecture was on the resemblances between Jesus of New Testament and Lord Krishna.

It must not be forgotten that Annie Besant was the prime factor in influencing men and women of other lands in favour of Hindu thought and culture at a time when India’s own sons and daughters were becoming strangers to their own religion and culture and were beginning to think that their ancestors had been barbarians and forgetting to learn even their mother tongue,... (38)

The reasons why Mrs Besant, despite being a Theosophist, was specially attracted towards Hinduism could be explained as follows. In the first place, the theosophists affirm to the "majesty and sufficiency of eastern scriptures". Different theosophists worked for the different Eastern scriptures, namely, Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky converted and devoted themselves to Buddhism and worked for Zoroastrianism. Mrs Besant said that Colonel Olcott had worked most for Zoroastrianism and Buddhism since both were congenial to him than Hinduism. Yet his rejoicing was great when he came to know that she was intellectually and instinctively Hindu and would be able to serve Hinduism. Her love and work for Hinduism was greeted by the Chief Theosophists as it was a part of their religious policy, to enshrine the Eastern scriptures.

So Mrs Besant’s service to Hinduism was nothing but the service of a true theosophist, elevating the magnanimity of an ancient Eastern Religion.

Secondly, Mrs Besant was particularly fascinated by Hinduism for two reasons: The philosophy of the religion itself; and her belief in the theory of incarnation. Mrs Besant always

38  C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Annie Besant, p. 58.
39  Annie Besant, India Bond Or Free?, p. 27.
emphasized the essentiality of thinking which improves the reasoning faculties, by the experiences of one's consciousness. She believed and said: "until a doctrine approves itself to your own intelligence and conscience it is not true for you".

The Hinduism itself appealed most to her. She wrote:

...the immense superiority of Hinduism as a philosophy encasing an all-embracing religion and a science of yoga, which was an open road to the world invisible, to the ancient Rishis of India and the East, to the Saints of Christendom, to the wisdom which included all religions, excluded none. (42)

The liberal philosophy of Hinduism had placed it to the lofty positions in the world of religions. She believed the Hindu religion, as the 'first born daughter of the ancient Brahma-Vidya', and its least imperfect representatives. She emphatically eulogised Hinduism when she said: "...if there be one religion in the world which has the right to call upon its children for support and help, it is that ancient religion - the Sanatana Dharma".

For reasons she explained:

Among all the religions of the world, there is none which has so bound up in itself the private life of the individual with the public life of the nation and the state, as the religion of the Sanatana Dharma. (44)

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40 Theodore Besterman, A Modern Prophet, p. 163.
41 Annie Besant's Australian Lectures: 1908, quoted in Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 197.
43 Speech delivered at the 27th Anniversary, 1910, of the Srinivasa Mandiram and Charities, Bangalore - under the title of "The Ancient Ideal of Duty". See Speeches and Writings of Annie Besant, p. 2.
44 Ibid.
Other than philosophy Mrs Besant had a special weakness for this religion which was based on the belief of the theory of rebirth. The theosophists, though placed all religions on the same plank and fought against all sorts of social evils, superstitions, and priestly domination, they believed in incarnation and karma. "The inner leaning to one rather than the other was, of course", she explained, "the results of previous lives".

Mrs Besant was strongly convinced that she was a Hindu in her previous birth. In this life she claimed that she possessed a "Hindu soul in European body". This inner feeling and consciousness predominated in her later part of life and was inspired to work for Hinduism. In this respect she was further enchanted by the wisdom of a high caste Brahmin mystic of Allahabad - Professor G.N. Chakravarti, whom she accepted as her guru.

45 The Mashrig (Gorakhpur), 2 May 1911 remarked that Mrs Besant regarded Hinduism as a scientific religion and as her spiritual guide, and preferred it to other religions obtaining in the world. NNWR (U.P.), January to June 1911. N.A.I.

46 Annie Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, p. 31.

47 Prof. Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti originally belonged to an orthodox family at Banaras. He was a well-versed, learned scholar of attractive physique and intellect with enchanted manners. He had passed the science and law examinations and taught physical science and mathematics at various Indian colleges. Later he became the professor of Mathematics at Allahabad University. He earned a great reputation as a mystic and hypnotist. He represented India in the theosophical convention at London in 1893 at the age of thirty. Mrs Besant was fascinated by his sensational lecture at Blavatsky Lodge and became his disciple (chela) in spite of her seniority in age. He was a great influential man and helped Mrs Besant in founding and affiliating the Central Hindu College at Banaras.
Thirdly, Mrs Besant was convinced that a special assignment was bestowed on her by 'The Ever Living Rishis', to save Hinduism from materialism and bigotry. She wrote:

I had joined the Theosophical Society in 1889, and knew that one of the purposes for which it was intended by the ever-living Rishis...was the rescue of India from the materialism...by the revival of ancient philosophical and scientific religions, and, by the placing of India as an equal partner in a great Indo-British Common-wealth of India,... (48)

So revival of ancient philosophical and scientific religion means the revival of Hinduism which was nothing but a God's order to His devotee - Annie Besant, which prompted her to work for Hinduism.

Fourthly, the socio-political conditions in India also prompted Mrs Besant to work for Hinduism. She was fully aware that India's fundamental unity had always been "religious and cultural, and not political". Hinduism was not only a religion but a cultural heritage also. Reviving Hinduism she decided to kindle the spirit of oneness of India which would rescue "India to her ancient freedom", by uniting the disintegrating forces in the political life of India. Mrs Besant observed that between the two major religions, Islam and Hinduism, the Hindus with their religion from time immemorial had neglected their religion most and lost their binding force. But the Islam with a thousand years of life in India had taken care to implant her tenets in the minds of her children before she had allowed them to pass under

49 Radhakumud Mukerjee quoted in Annie Besant's *The Future of Indian Politics*, p. 6.
non-religious tuition.

The result of religious base of Muslim minds was seen in the unity of purposes, eagerness to co-operate with each other, in their disciplined following of their leaders, so that they could win the respect of the government and were gradually listened to them when they put forward a plea as a Muslim nation, even if it was for an unfair privilege. The Hindus on the other hand for the negligence of their religion were disintegrated into hostile parties. Through religion she decided to put a thread of unity into the divided Hindus, the majority section of the people of "Bharatvarsha", as she knew that religion alone could bind men together and form a nation.

Fifthly, Mrs Besant could feel the pulse of the Hindu nation when she was approached in Bangalore in December 1893 by a group of Brahmins "to lead a Hindu national movement on the lines of Hindu religion". She understood that the Hindus were eager for their reformation and resurrection. They only needed a leader to lead the movement under proper guidance and Mrs Besant conceded to their eagerness.

Last but not the least was the liberalism and the open door policy of Hinduism in comparison with Islamism which attracted Mrs Annie Besant most among the two religions. She knew that

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51 Ibid.

52 It is reported to Lucifer, the Magazine of the English Section of the Theosophical Society in 1893. A.H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant, p. 20.
Islam with its rigidity and impregnability would forbid her entry into the community and faith with a European body. During her lecture tours in India she came into close contact of Muslims and assessed them as "impossible to breakdown". All these factors influenced Mrs Annie Besant's mind to work for Hinduism and inspired her to open a Hindu college and a denominational Hindu University at Banaras after she had landed on the shores of India.

III

FROM ANNIE TO ANNA BAI

Mrs Annie Besant's new phase of life as Anna Bai started at the age of forty-six when she came to India on the 16 November 1893. Her voyage was not accepted smoothly and unanimously both by the Indians and the Europeans. Really it was a very daring and sensational voyage for a European lady "to a land of occultism to teach occultism". Presses in India and Europe became very sceptical and critical. The "Indian Spectator" suggested that her posing as a real teacher of Theosophy was premature and that she...should have studied first under Indian instructor". Radical Hindus took seriously her profession of Hinduism. They

54 Olcott gave her that Hindu name.
56 Ibid.
believed that the Indian spiritualism was one of the chief causes of India's restoration and condemned Mrs Besant's influence and much of the mischievous results of the reactionary movement with the most grotesque practices of the least useful customs of Hindu society. The Hindustan Review of Allahabad observed:

The people of Hindusthan are coming to realize and chafe at the incongruity of an English woman teaching the Hindus Hinduism, and are talking of putting a period to this grotesque anomaly. (58)

To the conservative orthodox Hindus, Mrs Besant, however, brilliant and efficient she was to uphold the cause of Hinduism, and however, humbly she had adopted herself to their religion and announced proudly, Hinduism as her own religion, her soul - a Hindu soul, she was nothing but a "Mlechha". Even her touch and utterances would pollute the Religious Scriptures. Hardayal, an orthodox Hindu Pandit wrote: "Mark the sad spectacle, ponder over its deep significance. It is the death-knell of Hindu race". (59)

The western press interpreted her coming as politically motivated and charged with improper political acts in India and was likely to encounter stubborn resistance from the bureaucratic establishment in India. The London Times reported on her lecture at the Calcutta Star Theatre:


59 Ibid.
...an English lady 'spiritualist' is wooing Bengal audiences to her last new faith by assuring them that if the youths of India would act up to the traditions of their past, instead of fawning on a foreign power, they would not long remain under a foreign yoke'. (60)

Mrs Besant was quite conscious about her past political career in England and promptly declined the political charge declaring that her political life was nothing but a closed chapter and defined her activities as that of a purely spiritual worker only. She proclaimed: "My work in the spheres of politics is over and I shall never resume it". She also said:

...I honestly believe that the future of India, the greatness of India, and the happiness of her people, can never be secured by political methods, but only by the revival of her philosophy and religion. To this therefore, I must give all my energies, and I must refuse to spread them over other fields. (61)

Her attraction towards spiritualism was the real cause which, as Sri Prakasa rightly observed: "to abandon her assured position as a great and trusted leader of the country". The light which beckoned Mrs Besant "...seemed to her to come from India, which became for her both homeland and her holy land, she felt she must go there for work for the rest of her days". She was awfully tired with the hard, crude, materialistic life of the world. Her mother rightly lamented "...you have always been too

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60 An article on "Indian Affairs on 5th February 1894", quoted in A.H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant, p. 22.


62 Sri Prakasa, Mrs Annie Besant: Her Educational Movement in Banaras, Sri Prakasa Papers, Manuscript Section, NMML, Delhi.
religious" and elsewhere repeated "yes, it has been darling Annie's only fault, she has always been too religious".

Mrs Besant came of a middle class Victorian Christian family. She inherited the excellent qualities of her parents; versatility, volatility, interest in classical literature, language, philosophy, outspokenness, religious scepticism from the father William Burton Wood and courage, determination and religiousness from her mother Emily Morris Wood. Her whole life was pervaded with her mother's religious influence who believed that "woman ought to be religious". Annie's childhood was engaged in initiating the most extreme observances of Christianity. Her religious interest was fanned by Miss Marryat of the strictest sect of the Evangelicals she was an Evangelical. She used to live in religious fantasy. Her mystical first love was dedicated to Jesus Christ, just as Mirabai, whose divine bridegroom was Lord Krishna. "She could not be the bride of Heaven and therefore became the bride of Mr Frank Besant". The contradiction of the 'Four Apostles' of Bible reeled about her world of religious fantasy and she started to question the


64 A.H. Nethercot, op. cit., p. 16; and Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 22.

65 Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 39.

66 Remarked W.T. Stead, a Theosophist and a close friend of Mrs Besant. G.M. Williams, op. cit., p. 23.
divinity of Christ which deteriorated the relation between the husband and wife and ultimately separated the two. Annie chose the path full of thorns to know the truth.

After leaving home and giving up Christianity, Mrs Besant stated that she had first been attracted to spiritualism, but at that time she had been working too hard for her livelihood. She became a secularist. Under the guidance of Charles Bradlaugh she studied psychology which puzzled her most. At this time a report on spiritualistic phenomenon issued by Dialectical Society from the experiments conducted by J.H. Levy and ten other people, all above suspicion impressed her greatly. In this fluidistic condition of mind one of the members of her science class brought her a copy of Sinnelt's The Occult World which at first repelled her. But afterwards she was fascinated by its contents and got the key to her long sought goal and became a Theosophist. It was, for religion, she missed her golden days of girlhood by fasting and praying. It was for religion, her first love was a failure. It was for religion she was attracted to Rev. Frank Besant. It was for religion she parted her husband. It was for religion she tasted the wine of liberty. It was for religion her latent talents and intellects were blossomed. It was the religion which turned her from Theist to Atheist. It was the religion which snatched her dear little children and made her a universal mother. For religion, she was denied to get the degree. For religion she embarked on a more rebellious and sensational career of a

Theosophist. It was the same religion which beckoned Mrs Besant to India and drifted her towards Northern India - to the holy city of Banaras - Kashi - the seat of ancient glorious Hinduism, which became the centre of her educational activities. Religion led to her education. She wrote "we began with the teachings of unity with the revival of religion. We passed on to the educational phase".

As a teacher and a member of the School Board of London she had an experience which taught her that the chief lever for the elevation of a nation to a higher place of thought and activity is education. In India at that time she rightly observed: "No more important question can occupy the attention of a nation than that of an education of the youth." 69 The true object of education which she aimed at was "to make the man a good Citizen of a free and spiritual Commonwealth of Humanity". 70

To achieve the purpose she held religious education as the 'vital necessity'..."as the basis for Morality...,as the inspiration of Art,...as the foundation of original literature.... is Religion necessary for the greatness of a nation, for what kind of nation can you have without Morality, without Art, without Literature?..." 71 She found that the British educational system had demoralized and denationalised the people of India which was

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68 Quoted in Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Nationalism in India, p. 15.
69 Annie Besant in an article from the Theosophist on "The Education of Hindu Youth", For India's Uplift, p. 57.
70 Annie Besant, Builder of New India, p. 411.
71 Ibid., p. 400.
one of the well educated nations in the past. The principal defects of English education as she perceived were the absence of religion in education, and 'too much a government affair'. It soon became clear to her that a system of national education was an absolute necessity. By national education, Mrs Besant meant "an education which is under national control, which provides for all the children of the nation and which directed with a sole eye to the moral, intellectual and spiritual welfare of the nation" along with the physical development. "To be truly useful", she held, "education must be founded on a knowledge of the past of the country as well as of its present; it must be designed in accordance with the ancient traditions and national habits, and adopted to modern necessities, to meet at every point the growing needs of an ever increasing nation".

The four chief features in the ancient Indian educational system appealed her most. In the first place, it was free from state control though it enjoyed its benevolence. Responsibility without authority of the state or the king was the keynote of ancient Indian education. Secondly, free and compulsory education controlled by the universities under the able guidance of a learned class of the Gurus. Thirdly, the compulsory residential system which brought the teacher and the students closer for a

72 Annie Besant, For India's Uplift, p. 54.
74 Annie Besant, a lecture on 9th March 1903 in Bombay on "Education as a National Duty", For India's Uplift, p. 16.
unique relationship. Fourthly, strict moral code of rules in the daily life of students through "Brahmacharya" system - a well-disciplined life.

The spirit of the Indian education should be absolutely Indian. She insisted: "you may dig your gold wherever you like - in Australia, America or India - but you must stamp it in the Indian mint". With all the ideals and theories of education along with a solid experience in the field, Mrs Besant plunged into reality. She founded the Central Hindu School and later College. The story of founding the institution was not a very long one. Mrs Besant assisted by Olcott, and several prominent Hindus on 7 July 1898 started a school for the avowed purpose of teaching Hinduism to Hindus along with a secular system of instructions.

Professor Jurgen Lutt, in his article entitled "The Movement for the Foundation of the BHU" (Benares Hindu University) stated that the original theosophical concept of the Central Hindu College as an institution embracing all religions could not materialize due to lack of support from members of other religions. But his view is not corroborated by other evidences. Mrs Besant was specially attracted to Hinduism and the college was for the Hindus only despite the fact that she always referred theosophy as

75 New India, 21 January 1918; Annie Besant, Builder of New India, p. 428.
77 Jurgen Lutt, "The Movement for the Foundation of the BHU" (Benares Hindu University), German Scholars on India, vol. II, pp. 163-9.
the parents of the Central Hindu College. In course of time the college was open to all only on the insistence of the Maharaja of Banaras, the chief patron of the college, who wanted to appease the British Government of India by showing his liberal outlook. The Maharaja was also nervous about his gift because he came to know the adverse attitude of some of the English officers towards the institution. Mrs Besant initially declined to consent but she agreed to make it an open institution. Practically there were no other students except one or two Muhammadans.

With the growing popularity of the institution the authority faced the housing problem. Mrs Besant appealed to His Highness Maharaja of Banaras, to donate an ancient summer palace with a large track of land, and the latter conceded it. Thus, the housing problem of the new born baby of Mrs Besant was solved and the stepping stone of the future Hindu University was founded by a lady who was "European by birth" but Hindu in soul and to whom India and the Indian people seemed nearer than the nation to which by birth she belonged.

78 Sir H. Butler was one of them.
80 *Ibid*.
81 H.V. Lovett, the Commissioner of Banaras, reported in a note dated 23 February 1910, that he was informed that the late Maharaja of Mysore who greatly admired Mrs Besant influenced the Maharaja of Banaras. But the Maharaja claimed in a speech before the students of the Central Hindu College on occasion of the Tenth Anniversary that he at once fell in with her proposals. *Ibid*. *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, December 1908, pp. 305-6.
The uppermost thought in Mrs Besant's mind was the rein-
vigoration of India; by reviving India's peoples, India's
literature and India's religion. With this object in view, she
started the Central Hindu College in 1898 at Banaras.

IV

CENTRAL HINDU COLLEGE

The Central Hindu College at Banaras, the brain child of
Mrs Annie Besant "was intended to be the beginning of an educa-
tional scheme" the "natural outcome of which was the emergence
of an independent National University for the people of India".
The college could never have begun as it did without the
assistance of the organizing energy and ability of Mrs Besant.

82 Anil Baran Ray, Students and Politics in India, p. 18.
83 On 10 April 1898 a meeting was invited by Annie Besant
at Banaras which was the beginning of the future Central
Hindu College. Prominent theosophists and Babu Upendra
Nath Basu attended the meeting. S.S. Dikshit, National-
ism and Indian Education, p. 92.
84 Annie Besant in a lecture on 12th January 1906, The
Statesman, 13 January 1906. Education Department, A
Proceedings, July 1911, Nos. 141-53 from Acting Secre-
tary to the Government of Madras to the Secretary,
Government of India.
85 H.V. Lovett, the Magistrate and Collector and then the

(footnote contd.)
Through this institution, Mrs Besant aspired to fulfil her long cherished dream of an independent institution of her own which would show the way how to eradicate the defects of the then educational system of India and enable the country's all round glorious revival of the past with modernity in order to have a "lofty position among the nations of the world". She addressed the younger generation thus:

The future of India was with you, her younger sons, and if you grow up into a noble manhood, your country will grow up with you and thus will rise among the peoples of the world. (87)

The Central Hindu College was a model-house, a lighthouse - an example, which should be followed by other sister institutions under a mother university. She sought the justification of the name Central Hindu College in the fact that this was to be the "Centre" of a large number of similar colleges

Commissioner of Banaras wrote in a note dated 23 February 1910, Calcutta Records, Home Department (Political), Deposit Proceedings, May 1910, p. 10. Iqbal Narain Gurru in a speech on "Mrs Besant and the Central Hindu College" said "during the first few years of the experience of the college she had more or less personally guided its affairs and had laid its foundations deep and strong...and made possible its phenomenal growth and popularity in the country". Iqbal Narain Gurru Papers, Individual and Manuscript Section, NMML.

86 Annie Besant, Kamala Lectures for 1924-1935. Indian Ideals in Education and Philosophy, and Art, p. 18

87 Central Hindu College Lectures II Sri Rama Chandra, The Ideal King: Some Lessons from the Ramayana. For the use of Hindu students in the Schools of India, p. 5.
Annex 88

An all-India character was to reveal through this institution from the very moment of its birth. Their idea was to start "a non-official educational institution where the vital defect of the official educational system, viz. the lack of provision for moral and religious training, could be made". The aim of the Central Hindu College was to teach Hindu Religion with revivalistic motive, along with the scheme of providing secular western knowledge. The objects of the Central Hindu College were two: 1) To establish educational institutions, including boarding houses, which should combine moral and religious training in accordance with the Hindu sastras, with secular education. 2) To promote imparting of similar religious and moral training in other educational institutions.

An outline of religious instruction was laid down by the Board of Trustees on 30 December 1900, on the basis of which

88 Annie Besant expressed in one of her lectures on the occasion of the anniversary of her college, Sri Prakasa, Mrs Besant: Her Educational Movement in Banaras, pp. 4-5. Sri Prakasa Papers. Individual and Manuscript Section, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.


90 S.S. Dikshit, Nationalism and Indian Education, pp. 92-93.

91 The chief promoters of the Central Hindu College signed a memorandum for the same.

Annie Besant and Bhagwan Das drew up a text book.  
The watch words of the Central Hindu College were patriotism and service to the motherland.

As regards the policy, Bhagwan Das, one of the pioneers of the institution stated it clearly in one of his letters to his son, Sri Prakasa:

The policy of the governing body of the Central Hindu College, on the Board of the Trustees, which policy the managing committee is bound to carry out is:

(1) to import religious & (sic) moral education together with secular intellectual and physical education, in order to create a foundation of upright character - on which foundation - in latter life all kinds of good and worthy citizen...might be built up.

(ii) to gather together in Central Hindu College representatives from all parts of India amongst

In 1903, the text book had become a graduated series of three works: 1) An Advanced Text Book of Sanatana Dharma intended for college students; 2) An elementary text book of Sanatana Dharma for the use of the higher and middle school classes; 3) Sanatana Dharma catechism which consisted of questions and answers for the use of small boys. Translations of them appeared in all major Indian languages. Jürgen Liitt, "The Movement for the BHU", in German Scholars on India, vol. II, p. 163.

S.S. Dikshit, Nationalism and Indian Education, p. 93.
students especially; amongst staff generally, in order to create mutual good understanding & (sic) sympathy amongst various provinces through this alumni of the alma mater in the future, thereby help on effectively & (sic) strongly the wielding together of the Indian people into an Indian nation.

(iii) Generally to concentrate the attention of the students on self-improvement, but;

(iv) to avoid commencing the super-structures before the foundations are ready; the college does not permit its student-boarders to engage in various traders, or to practice actual "soldiering" & (sic) so it does not wish them to engage practical politics.... The Board of Trustees would also find themselves compelled to adopt the changes... in form of 'practical', 'technical' object lesson; as against and contrasted with mere book education. (95)

The Central Hindu College was a protest against the established policy of education in India. It was commonly supposed

95 Dr Bhagwan Das to Sri Prakasa dated 2 November 1907, Bhagwan Das Papers. NMML.
that as one of its founders frankly said to the principal of the Queen's College, "it was the work on the lines of constitutional opposition".

Education at that time was monopolized by the government and the Christian missionaries. On the one side, the education was purely secular; on the other side it was dominated by a religion which was not and would never be the religion of the majority of the Indian people. Mrs Besant visualized the danger and correctly asserted:

Nothing can more swiftly emasculate national life, nothing can more surely weaken national character, than allowing the education of the young to be controlled by foreign influences, to be dominated by foreign ideals. (98)

As a Theosophist Mrs Besant was strongly against the Christian missionary education and tried to stop the educational activities motivated by the proselytizing consideration, by a counter-

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96 A note by H.V. Lovett, Calcutta Records, Home Department (Political), Deposit Proceedings, May 1910, p. 10.

97 The Tribune, 18 January 1906.

98 Quoted in Yudhisthira Kumar in Annie Besant as an Indian Educator, p. 57.

99 In a letter to Dayananda dated 18 February 1878, Olcott said that the theosophists have openly proclaimed themselves enemies of the Christian religion. Har Bilas Sarda, Life of Dayananda Saraswati, World Teacher, Part II, p. 525.
religious education through Hinduism—a religion of the soil followed by the majority of the Indian people. In the Central Hindu College religion was compulsory. Classes were started with a short service. Religious discussions were encouraged and Sanskrit was taught to all with special care, as English and Christianity were to the missionary education. Thus, it played a significant role against the government policy of neutrality in introducing an education without religion. As Mrs Besant said in a lecture:

When we began we were told: 'you cannot teach religion, because there will be endless sectarian troubles; you will have complaints from the parents of all the youth; it is impossible to teach religion to all the boys'. We have not found it impossible. (101)

She declared in an unambiguous voice, "we are here to teach religion, Hinduism to Hindus—that is our especiality". The Education Member Butler suspected that the Central Hindu

100 Every morning talk on religious questions and special classes on Religion during the week were held. Sanskrit verses were dictated and explained to the students to show that the main motto of all the religions was the same. Quotations of different scriptures were read before the students. In the boarding house special lessons were given on the Bhagavad Gita and on the performance of Sandhya.

101 Annie Besant, For India's Uplift (2nd edn.), pp. 29-30.

College was a reaction to the Muslim College at Aligarh. But his suspicion was not true at all. Being a theosophist she could not be a fanatic, so far as her revivalistic fervour was concerned. She herself explained that her work at the Central Hindu College was not rivalry but "rather than that of supplementing the work of other institutions". Thus, she could stir the heavy stone of status quo through her baby institution. The Central Hindu College attempted to bridge the gulf between the two Hindu nations - the Orthodox Hindu pandits and the Anglicised English educated Hindus. To cement the rift she innovated a great innovation. "A double bridge of Sanskrit and English" - "a peculiar thing" as Mrs Besant said, was introduced in Central Hindu College by making Sanskrit and English compulsory to students of both the departments. "Every boy who comes into the English Department is obliged to learn Sanskrit and the Sanskrit educated boys have to know English".

103 Butler to his Mother, 31 July 1903. Butler Papers, MCFR 2, NMML.

104 S.S. Dikshit, Nationalism in Indian Education, p. 93.


106 Annie Besant, a lecture on "Education as a National Duty", For India's Uplift, p. 33.

107 Ibid., p. 32.
Teachers and students were invited from all over India to make the Central Hindu College a centre of unity. There were some foreign teachers among the staff. Lala Lajpat Rai criticized the Banaras College for this foreign influence. Mrs Besant wanted to place the Europeans and Indians on the same basis. Through the foreign teachers in the staff the principle of equality was followed. Those European teachers were guided by the ideals of Universal Teachership. They were not highly paid as other European teachers in the Aligarh College, which Lala Lajpat Rai failed to distinguish. They used to take a very nominal honorarium for their teaching like the ancient Brahmans. Moreover, Mrs Besant believed that India should learn something from the West, specially, the modern sciences. To offer the best type of education she recruited teachers imbied with the spirit of internationality. The Central Hindu College introduced the inter-dining system to rise above casteism. Harmonious relations with others, truthfulness, self-control,


109 Ibid.

patriotism, the love of one's country and the public spirit, caring for the nation more than for oneself were valued most in the teachings. To combat the force of deep-rooted inferiority complex and rouse the optimist spirit of the students by revealing their golden days of the past special attention was given to the Central Hindu College curriculum with an emphasis on history. Besant observed that nothing was more needed at this time, to train and to balance than the study of history by college students, to guide their steps aright in these perilous days. Special Hindu history books were written and studied. To keep pace with the modern advancement of western pedagogy science was made compulsory for all students. Thus, a synthesis between the Ancient and Modern, orthodox and liberal, spiritual and secular was achieved through the Central Hindu College curriculum. She addressed: "Look back therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that, look forward, and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was".

Mrs Besant, who advocated for an educational system controlled by the Indians, guided by the Indian ideals, and inspired by the Indian spirit encouraged by the Indian religion, introduced English as the medium of instruction in the institution. Here she played the role of a perfect educationist who held that the

111 The Future of Indian Politics, p. 149.
children were not a sheet of blank paper on which one can write whatever he likes. She strongly stated that children's future should not be doomed to carry on an experiment in the educational field. She could not deny the fact that English education was essential in a student's life to keep pace with the age and to earn better livelihood. She believed, so long the whole education system was not changed "boys of the upper classes must under the circumstances of the day receive an English education", and "it is idle to kick against facts we cannot change". She suggested that first of all the freedom in education should be achieved and then first thing must be the restoration of the mother tongues of India to their proper places in that field. Otherwise it would be "to put the horse before the cart".

The future of the alumni instigated Mrs Besant to affiliate the Central Hindu College to Allahabad University and not

113 Annie Besant, *For India's Uplift*, p. 58.
114 Annie Besant, *For India's Uplift*, p. 58.
to incur the armed opposition of the British Government in India. She was quite conscious about the fact that the Government seal on the degree was the most important thing in the field of employment. Parents would not send their children if the institution was not recognized by the Government, though she knew at the same time, that these government universities were not the real universities at all in the proper sense of the term. As she was in no way at war with the Government, and for the forced loyalty to progress constitutionally in conformity with the atmosphere and environment, some people criticized and questioned the policy of the Central Hindu College. Dr Bhagwan Das answered the criticism and explained that the governing body of the Central Hindu College tried to steer a middle course policy between ancient and the modern between the flattering and rudeness and to extend a gentleman like courtesy and friendliness to every one including the government, as the government was the


118 Dr Bhagwan Das to Sri Prakasa, 2 November 1907, Bhagwan Das Sri Prakasa Papers. NMML. The main points of Lajpat Rai's criticism of the Hindu College in his *Problem of National Education* were: affiliation policy, introduction of the university course and the examination and finally neglect of the Indian language in its curriculum.
de facto authority and they had to seek and receive its help in the matter of affiliations, land acquisition and many other such ways. Dr Das wrote that the government body was obliged to follow this policy only for the students and not for themselves. But the affiliation could not force Mrs Besant to sacrifice her all educational ideals on the altar of autocracy. Maintaining the status quo the Central Hindu College was considered as an independent institution and preserved the dignity, speciality and novelty in its character. The Central Hindu College management was in the hands of a band of learned and patriotic Indian educationists; and not under the control of a government department which put the educators into a steel frame. The Central Hindu College introduced special curriculum along with the prescribed course of the Allahabad University. It followed special rules and regulations for the students and teachers. It adopted "a distinctive Indian dress instead of the hybrid English costume". The Central Hindu College also put down the fees to the lowest possible point and made

119 Dr Bhagwan Das to Sri Prakasa, 2 November 1907, Bhagwan Das Sri Prakasa Papers, NMML.

120 Ibid.


122 The Central Hindu College Magazine (monthly), January 1908.
the higher education within the reach of the poor and the middle classes of people. It used to give training to boys in the laboratory; provided less and less instruction in which memory only was cultivated; and in which the reasoning faculty were thrown entirely on one side; taught them to play games for a strong and healthy bodies and endeavoured to prevent the great nervous strain invoked in study. All these were possible to preserve only because she refused the financial assistance or grant from the government. She was well aware of the fact that "wherever money is taken from the government, government has the right and the duty to supervise the way in which that money is employed". "Touch not the king's penny" was her slogan. So she preferred to spread her begging bowl to the Indian princes,

123 Mrs Besant was inspired with this ideal by Miss Marryat, her teacher, see Informative Years.

124 Annie Besant, in a lecture entitled "Education as a National Duty", For India's Uplift, p. 20.

125 Ibid.
merchants and wealthy peoples with sympathy in India and abroad, and did not allow the government to poke the nose into the internal administration only by virtue of economic power.

But, Mrs Annie Besant, the lady of Liberty, who was basically high tempered, resentful of interference and suggestion, could not prolong 'forced loyalty' for an indefinite period. She was forced to follow the policy of middle course only to protect her new born child as a mother from the evil forces. Only for that purpose she averted all open causes of friction with the authorities and proposed to work independently but not in opposition to the government as Bengal Council of Education proposed. Soon the fixed rules of the Allahabad University made the soul of the free thinker gasped heavily. The Central Hindu College had to observe the curriculum laid down by the University. They had to teach things they did not want and omit other things they wanted. Such submission she had to accept.

126 Lala Lajpat Rai in the same book criticized that "The Benares College has been almost regularly in receipt of state aid". But Mrs Besant never accepted the state aid and this fact was eyed with suspicion by the British Government. See Home (Political) Deposit Proceedings, May 1910, no. 10.

127 Lala Lajpat Rai, Young India, p. 148.

until a National University by the Indian for the Indian and of the Indian was created.

In the meantime the growing popularity of the Central Hindu College for its independent, special novel and unique features combined with Mrs Annie Besant's personal charm, oratorical genius and appetite for hard work, the orderly conduct, of its pupils and their brilliant success. "It received a grand chorus of approbation from the Indian press, expressing its debt of endless gratitude to the Theosophical Society, especially to its worthy leader Mrs Annie Besant", which urged Mrs Besant to found a mother for the daughter institutions in place of a step mother. The Central Hindu College magazine proudly declared that several schools had adopted the Central Hindu School as a model. In princely states, viz., Kashmir, Mysore, Baroda, Rajasthan and even Hyderabad, colleges were founded on

129 S.S. Dikshit, Nationalism and Indian Education, p. 94.

130 State controlled Allahabad University.

131 A small Hindu High School started at Srinagar which later developed into the first Hindu College. Theosophical Review, June 1905, May 1906; Central Hindu College Magazine, 1905-6; also in A.H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lines of Annie Besant, p. 86.
the same pattern. Many institutions were affiliated directly with it for religious instructions such as Madanapalle High School. The Tribune stated:

In education our unaided essays in the field of opening private schools and colleges have proved so successful on the whole that we may well think of taking a step further and try to have a university of our own. (132)

The Maharaja of Banaras said in a lecture "in spite of numerous obstacles, she now stood before us, looking on the college with which a mother rejoiced to look upon her grown up child".

The success of the Central Hindu College, its tremendous popularity and the rigid rules and regulations of the Allahabad University spurred Mrs Besant to grow her adolescent institution to maturity. Her long cherished sweet dream was partially

132 The Tribune, 5 January 1908.

133 Central Hindu College Magazine, December 1908 (On the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the College).

134 The Hindi Hindusthan (Kalakankar), 26 February 1907 pointed out that the college took particular care to build up the character of students side by side with their intellect. It is peculiar in this respect that practical work, such as clay modelling, drawing and music, were also taught there, and that particular attention was given to the study of Sanskrit. The same newspaper of 13 March appreciated the laudable efforts of Central Hindu College to encourage technical education among the Indians, and had proposed to send a number of its students to foreign countries at its own

(footnote contd.)
realized. She determined to achieve the complete realization of the same, by turning the Central Hindu College into an independent university of her own with nation's support and sympathy. Her strong conviction was that the Central Hindu College with its remarkable innovations in the field of contemporary Indian education would ultimately bring about the desired cultural and national regeneration of the country. All the time she had nourished the idea in her mind but never expressed, because she knew that 'nature grows her plants in silence and in darkness and only when they have become strong do they put their heads above the ground'.

Like a mother bird she was protecting the child, all the time with her wings, from the unfavourable and opposing factors so long. For the safety of her brainchild she had to adopt something against her conscience, she had to sacrifice her principles to a certain extent for the time being. She had to follow forced loyalty to the government. But the indomitable spirit of Mrs Annie Besant, a universal mother, who dreamt about her brainchild was waiting anxiously for the opportune moment to hit upon her plan when the iron would be red. The opportunity came with the publication of the report of the universities commission. She found the ground was strong enough to put the head of baby plant above the ground to be a fruitful tree with branches all over India.

cost for the purpose. NNWR (U.P.), January to June 1907, p. 244. N.A.I.

135 S.S. Dikshit, Nationalism and Indian Education, pp. 93-94.
THE UNIVERSITY COMMISSION

The idea of an independent Hindu University put its head above the ground when the Report of the Indian Universities Commission came to light. It acted as a spark to kindle her inspiration. The heinous political motive which prompted Lord Curzon to appoint a Commission was to cripple the growing seditious nationalism among the educated Indian people through a strictly state-controlled, limited system of education. He was of the opinion which held that English education in India "has given birth to a tone of mind and to a type of character, that is, ill-regulated, averse from discipline, discontented and in some cases actually disloyal". This disloyalty, discontent and indiscipline were further nourished by the indigenous and independent private schools and colleges governed by the Indian people practising the idea of liberation of education, from the foreign yoke. These institutions were the hot-bed of politics. Their ultimate goal was to thwart the alien government control and to establish a national system of education controlled by the Indians only.

The Commission was born with a mask of 'benevolent attempt'.


137 These points were not made by Curzon at the Conference at Simla but were discussed by Curzon and the members of his Council and the Secretary of State confidentially.
to report and recommend on the system of University education, for the improvement of the quality of education disregarding the quantity. It was supposed to be a body of 'experts' with only two Indian members — for simple eye-wash. The Commission's report was published in June 1902 with a "Note of Dissent" by the Hindu member Sir Gooroo Das Banerjee, representing 70 per cent of the population. The Commission recommended rigid geographical limitations, enhancing cost of education, centralisation of all educational control in Government hands, reducing the control of "popular element" and thus ensured that the university would not become a political organization pursuing ends disapproved by the government. By the rigid geographical limitation it attempted to check the power of the existing universities and the possibility of a university emerging out as an institution whose influence would be widespread to different parts of the country through its daughter institutions, i.e. the affiliated colleges. It also attempted to rouse the sense of provincialism and divisionalism among the people of India. Curzon, the faithful follower of the policy of the 'Divide et Impera' did not spare the sacred field of education for which also the above policy guideline was prescribed by him. By enhancing the cost of education, the Commission limited higher education only to the richer sections and closed its doors to the poor and the middle class population in utter disregard to the overwhelming majority of this strata. Here also an attempt was made to divide the people of India, into highly educated and privileged class of a few versus the uneducated and unprivileged mass. The sinister motive
was to create a cleavage in the population of India. Consequently, a class-factionalism would emerge which would hinder the growth of Indian nationalism and would bring an end of "United India". The Commission's report was also directed against the 'popular element' of the private schools and colleges which by their cheap rate of fees earned the sympathy, gratitude and faith of the nation. Another factor which instigated the Universities Commission as well as Lord Curzon to make the higher education prohibitively expensive was to deprive the hereditary, learned middle class Brahmins of higher education. Anglo-Indian attitude towards this class was well-known. Lord Curzon probably followed the Anglo-Indian tradition by believing that "the nationalism was the creation of Brahmins". This view was more nourished because of the fact – a large number of prominent leaders of Indian nationalism e.g. Sir Gooroodas Banerjee (who disapproved the majority sections of the report of the Indian Universities Commission by a note of dissent) Satish Chandra Mukherjee, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Madan Mohan Malaviya, G.K. Gokhale, B.G. Tilak, etc. were Brahmins. It aimed at limiting the higher education only to the wealthy class like princes, merchants, etc. who were gentle, loyal and easily controlable. Mrs Annie Besant, on the other hand, believed that if India had true Brahmins, all educational problems would have been solved.

138 For details about these see Report of the Indian Universities Commission, 1902, Part I, pp. 1-56.
139 Valentine Chirol in his book Indian Unrest strongly advocated and supported this view of 'Indian Nationalism a creation of Brahmins'.
140 Annie Besant, Builder of New India, p. 397.
By centralisation of power in the hands of the government and affiliating or nullifying the recognition on the ground of lower standard of education, Curzon wanted to control or crush the independent unaided private colleges. Specially those who neither accepted nor allowed to interfere the government in the management of the institutions.

The report of the Commission was a death-knell to the Central Hindu College which promulgated certain regulations, in the conduct of its policy which were contradictory to the principles of the report of the Commission. Mrs Annie Besant expressed her apprehension in a lecture "Our work will be destroyed, and the results we are trying to bring about, and have brought about to some extent, will be utterly wasted, will be impossible to carry on,..." 141

Mrs Annie Besant's goal of making the Central Hindu College a central institution with daughter colleges all over India was going to be jeopardized if the Act were passed. Her Hindu College was not the goal but only a means, not the end but the beginning, nor the zenith but the ground of her educational mission, to fulfill the desire of "Deva", which became an eye-sore to British Government. Mrs Besant's aim was to introduce free education like the ancient system of Indian education. But to meet the necessities, the Central Hindu College introduced fees lowest to the point possible and became very popular within a very short time for its activities. Mrs Annie Besant expressed her mission, and proposed to found the Central Hindu College in

141 Annie Besant, *For India's Uplift*, p. 154.
the following manner:

Forty years later, having revived Indian religions and started Musalman and Hindu Colleges and Schools, and having meanwhile studied Indian history and assimilated its lessons, we have resolved to revive the Ancient ideals of Indian Education, and Indian Culture to teach our children in their Mother tongue, to make Indian Ideals the basis of Indian Civilisation, renouncing the hybrid and sterile ideals of anglicised-Indianism, and to adopt them to a new form, instinct with the Ancient Life, and moulding it into a glorious new body for the Ancient spirit. India will then lead the world into a new Era of Literature and Beauty, Brotherhood and Peace. (142)

"Cheap rate of fees, efficient system and religious education"—all these were perceived as potential threats to the British Raj. Mrs Annie Besant thought that if the government rate and fees were not adopted after the Act, the government would close the college and not permit it to carry on its work. (143) The Central Hindu College introduced certain special rules of its own e.g. Brahmacharya, as a necessary concomitant for intellectual, emotional and physical growth, non-eligibility of the married students and clear acceptance of the ancient system of Brahmanical supremacy. Her faith in the Brahmanical supremacy was expressed in the following speech: "...when a learned visited Royalty, when a wise one entered a court even Sri Krishna descended from the throne and bowed at the feet of the sage". (144)

142 Annie Besant, Indian Ideals in Education, Philosophy and Religion and Art, p. 35.
143 Ibid., p. 155.
144 Once Sudama, a poor Brahmin came to Lord Krishna. Krishna, the king cordially greeted him and washed his feet respectfully. Ibid., p. 9.
Her early enthusiasm towards Brahmanical supremacy led her to advocate the desirability of practising the four original Indian castes and adhering to their rules of segregation.

All these and other factors taking together created a suspicion in the Education Department. Sri Prakasa said:

Government was very displeased at the independent ways of the Hindu College. There had been clashes between the authorities of the College and those of Government on many occasions. They were very keenly desirous of getting this institution under their control from the very start. (146)

Mrs Annie Besant could read the writings of the wall (in the Report of the Universities Commission) and resolved to fight against it. She said: "we are obliged to struggle at Benares in keeping our fees low".

She started campaigning against the report through criticisms, cautions, warnings and appeals, to the goodwill of the British Government, in order to nullify it. Her whole thoughts were pervaded with the single purpose of saving her brain child from the evil spirit. Her whole intelligence was devoted to the single mission - how to emancipate her baby institution, the Central Hindu College and other religious-cum-educational institutions. Her whole energy was engaged to keep away ravage of the ruler, from the agony of Lord Curzon's educational policy. She perhaps recalled with horror the agonizing memories of

146 Sri Prakasa, Dr Bhagwan Das, p. 53.
147 Annie Besant, For India's Uplift (2nd edition), p. 112.
snatching her dear little Mabel from her. Perhaps she recapitulated also bitter memories of separation from her mother in her childhood. Ambitious Annie who had struggled almost all through her life against the society, law and the authority was not ready to visualize the premature death of her brain-child. She had an ardent nature and was by no means ready to give up the cause which she had started at the threat of some force bigger and stronger than herself.

She thought that the only way to save her brain-child was to turn the Central Hindu College into an independent Hindu University which she had dreamt for a long time. She was waiting for an opportune moment to let the iron enough red, with protest and indignation of the educated leaders against the deliberate attempt to throttle higher education in India. When the people had raised alarm, a clamour for a national education under a national university throbbed the air of India, when the Indian National Congress of 1902 expressed its grave concern by criticism and condemnation, Mrs Annie Besant struck the hammer hard by publicly unveiling her long cherished, poignant idea of an

148 Annie was attached to the Hindu College as she had been to her mother. Her mother once said: "Little one (the name she called her) if you cling to mamma in this way, I must really get a string and tie you to my apron, and how will you like that"? Annie replied "O Mamma, darling, do let it be in a knot". Mrs Annie Besant's love for her mother was an idolatry and her mother's for her a devotion. But circumstances forced to separate the little child from her. For details see Annie Besant, An Autobiography, p. 34.

149 Meeting held at Ahmedabad in Bombay Presidency on 23, 24 and 26 December 1902, the Eighteenth Congress. Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom, pp. 352-54.
independent Hindu University. In a lecture delivered in Bombay on 9 March 1903, entitled "Education as a National Duty", she placed the alternative suggestion of denominational universities controlled by the Indians for the Indians, of the Indians, grown out of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (in Aligarh) and the Hindu College of Banaras. She said:

I hope to see, in days to come, a Mussalman University growing out of the Aligarh College and a Hindu University growing out of the Banares College, so that these universities may lead the national life of India, as the Oxford and Cambridge Universities lead the national life of England. (150)

The universal mother Annie placed before the nation the possibility of emerging out a denominational, independent teaching and residential, religious universities in India modelled by new Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England.

In the same lecture she clearly evolved her idea of an independent Hindu University. She told the public that the work had started in the Central Hindu College in Banaras and in the same lecture she urged the nation to form a strong public opinion for the same to make the dream a reality. "I want you to make a public opinion, which will enable the Benares College to grow into a University, and to have daughter colleges in all the great cities in the land, where the students will learn Hindu religion and Western culture, and will know the West without becoming aliens from their ancestral faith". Thus, she evolved her idea

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150 Annie Besant, For India's Uplift, p. 32.
151 Delivered at Bombay on 9 March 1903.
152 Annie Besant, op. cit., p. 33.
of a Hindu University. And there will be no exaggeration to assert that it was Mrs Besant, and not Malaviya, who first conceived the idea of this university. But circumstances had their own verdict in history and while Malaviya is always remembered as the father of the Banaras Hindu University, Besant's name is put into oblivion and seen nowhere as its architect.

VI

UNIVERSITY ACT OF 1904.

Despite nation's wide criticism, storm of protest, refusal, indignation in general, and Mrs Besant's cautions, emotions and passions in particular, the University Act of 1904, based on the recommendations of the Universities Commission was passed. An unbelievably optimist Mrs Annie Besant found the silver lining amidst the deep dark cloud of danger in Curzon's educational Act. As a blessing in disguise she did not ignore the merit of the Act as the goal which would stir the people into activity "to generate the forces to make the engine of the nation move". She declared:

...when a nation does not move sufficiently swiftly along the path of progress, when she does not rouse herself enough to the voice that appeals, that warns, and that counsels, then the Deva of the nation takes other means in hand, .... And these other means used by the Deva are goads. They are like the whip that touches the horse when he is too lazy, and what you will look as national misfortunes, as things that you even cry out against with

153 Annie Besant, in a lecture on India's Awakening For India's Uplift, p. 112.
insistence and with passion, these are very often, rightly seen, the goads which make a nation move a little faster towards the goals on which Deva's eyes are fixed. (154)

From 1898 onwards she had appealed, warned and suggested to a great extent through her powerful pen, silver tongue and golden voice to move swiftly along the path of progress by denunciation of the existing educational system. She tried her best humanizing the nation by historical sense, options, and value dimension in their orientation by evolving a project. But it did not stimulate the nation strongly enough to be prompted them into action. But the Act did. Mrs Annie Besant as a seasoned educationist and political agitator knew that the interrelation of the awareness of aim and of process was the basis of planning action, which implies methods, objectives and value options.

By the Act of 1904 the nation became more aware of the British aim to throttle the spread of higher education in India and to crush the independent indigenous attempts for an Indian system of education.

The people's conception about their national aim had gradually become clear. They could understand that the nation was passing through a very critical period of transition and they must enforce their power to break the old system for a new. Renunciation should be the watchword. Lord Curzon's University Act and other disadvantages afforded the best possible stimulus to the people to provide for themselves the education which they

154 Annie Besant, in a lecture on India's Awakening For India's Uplift. no. 107-8.
What Mrs Besant felt at that time essential was the method or process to be implemented before the nation. Though she was sufficiently experienced with the fact that the "masses are 'mute' that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society...."

But as a revolutionary she had her respect for the people and confidence in their capacity, their efficiency and their tremendous power of public opinion which could thwart the mischievous British policy in education. She plunged into the active role of a manipulative leader evolving out the methods and process by utilizing the hot and bitter feeling in the hearts of many of the people affected. She laid before the nation a revolutionary, dynamic project, in the form of a well devised and well-directed plan where people would take initiative and enthusiasm in the precarious movement of transforming and recreating, the system of education.

First, she urged the formation of Educational Boards consisting of intelligent men and princes without the permission of the Government in every district of India. The first lesson of defying and denying the Government by the people of India in the field of education was taught by Mrs Annie Besant. Secondly, she suggested to create independent schools, colleges and universities. But a priori to make it a reality and successful she proclaimed it was necessary to popularise the idea of a national

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155 The Tribune, 17 January 1906.
university, specially among the princes, the merchants and employes of labourers, as shall induce them to recognize the degrees given by the Indian universities as valid credentials.

It was obvious to Mrs Besant that Government would not recognize any system of education which was not stamped with their permission. If the Government did not recognize their degree as a passport for the jobs, the future of the present graduates of the Indian national university would be uncertain. Their entrance to government offices or other respectable professions would be barred as they were not the products of the denationalizing British educational system. But if the Indian princes, merchants and industrialists unanimously recognize the degree awarded by the Indian university and accept and employ the students in their respective field of professions then gradually the whole India would be imbied with the spirit of national education. The success of a single national university would generate the force and enthusiasm which would pervade all over India and would lead to give birth to other national universities in different parts of India.

Like the society, Mrs Besant herself at that time was passing through a period of transition. However, Curzon's tyrannical acts along with socio-economic, political and religious factors made her to change her previous plan of a denominational university - to an undenominational University in India.

157 Annie Besant, For India's Uplift, p. 112.
FROM DENOMINATIONAL TO UNDENOMINATIONAL

Mrs Annie Besant's view "without Hinduism there was no future for India but with Hinduism everything was possible", was in full swing in the year of 1903 after the publication of the Report of the Universities Commission. In the same year she publicly expressed her dream of a Hindu University and a Muslim University grown out of Banaras College and Aligarh College modelled on the lines of Oxford and Cambridge in England. Thus she favoured the idea of denominational institutions in the highest educational centres. But the same personality after less than three years rejected her old dream and embarked on a new project for undenominational universities in India. In January 1906 in a letter to Sri Hirenranath Basu she proclaimed her new plan of Indian universities consisting of "Chairs of Theology - Hindu, Mussalman, Parsi and even Christians" established in each of the five present provinces under the title of "Indian Universities". In a lecture Mrs Besant clearly stated her

158 Mrs Besant in a speech on 1 January 1903 at Central Hindu College, on the occasion of the celebration of Coronation day; 6th Annual Report of the Central Hindu College 1902-1903; Education Department, B Proceedings, February 1908, No. 23.

159 On 9 March 1903 Mrs Besant delivered a lecture in Bombay, Annie Besant, For India's Uplift, p. 32.

160 Exactly 2 years nine months.

161 Education Department, B Proceedings, February 1908, No. 23.
views about the scope of denominational and undenominational institutions in the sphere of education and declared though she favoured denominational schools and colleges, she had no faith in denominational universities in India. She also demarcated a line between denominational and national institution and refused to attribute full national characteristic to a denominational university.

Do you want a denominational or a national university? Will you have a university built up by Hindus for Hindus, another Musalmans for Musalmans and another perhaps by Parsis and so on; or will you have a system of a National University which shall affiliate alike denominational and undenominational colleges? I am in favour of a National University and not a denominational University. I am in favour of denominational school or colleges but a national university that unites them together. (162)

It was really difficult to reconcile these two contradictory views of Mrs Annie Besant. After 1903 she never uttered anything about her Hindu University Scheme and plunged upon a new.

The change of faiths and views was not at all surprising for Mrs Annie Besant. She galloped from one phase to another without looking back or repenting for the past. Her life reflected that when circumstances demanded and her inner soul dictated she like a passionate pilgrim left the old dwellings for the new in the quest of truth. In search of ultimate truth, her passions, emotions and sentiments, though played temporarily, but could not win over her. When in 1873 the marriage of Mrs Besant was broken, she walked out of her home and came to her mother.

162 In a meeting at Calcutta Star Theatre 12 January. The Tribune, 17 January 1906, a lecture on "The Need of a National University".
She had to struggle against her mother's emotional pleading with tears, throwing the head on her knees to yield to the marriage tie. Annie lamented in her *Autobiography* "It seemed like a crime to bring such anguish on her; and I felt as a murderer...."

Still she did not bow down to her mother's emotional sentiment to continue a life of hypocrisy and lie against her conviction of truth. She had to pay heavily for it but still she clung fast to truth.

From a faithful devotee of Jesus Christ she became an atheist, from secularist to socialist, and trade unionist and lastly a theosophist, each contradicting the previous one. She never bothered about the repercussions for the change which might shatter her secured sheltered life in future. She did not care the public reaction or criticism which could prove fatal for her career. She did not stick to her old beliefs only because of not to hurt her friends or close associates, even her own sentiment, though momentary hesitation sometimes prevailed on her mind.

When she embraced theosophy she analyzed her mind and asked:

Must I turn against materialism, and face the shame of publicly confessing that I had been wrong, misled by intellect to ignore the soul? Must I leave the army that had battled for me so bravely, the friends who through all brutality of social ostracism had held me dear and true? And he, (164) the strongest and finest friend of all, whose confidence I had shaken by my socialism, must he suffer the pang of seeing his co-worker, co-fighter of whom he had been so proud, to whom he had been so generous, go over to the opposing hosts, and leave the ranks

164 Charles Bradlaugh.
of materialism? What would be the look in Charles Bradlaugh's eyes when I told him that I had become a Theosophist? (165)

But the imperious necessity to achieve the goal and her uncompromising allegiance to truth bound her to join theosophy. No emotion could divulge an inch from her decision. She was always dictated by her inner voice in a critical moment.

She never spared a single moment to change the old track for a new, though it was deviated from her previous utterances and beliefs. It seemed as if she had forgotten what she told earlier. Mrs Archibald Keightley, formerly Mrs Julia Campbell Ver Planck of Pennsylvania one of Mrs Besant's friends once complained against her by stating her experience:

When working with or for Mrs Besant, whether in America or England, I always required from her direction in writing in order to guarantee

165 Annie Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 342-3. It was a great shock for Charles Bradlaugh when she became a socialist and greater shock for both Charles Bradlaugh and George Bernard Shaw when she embraced theosophy. The latter tried hard to dissuade her.

166 Once Mrs Besant was about to commit suicide as a result of an emotional discord with her husband. But when she was going to swallow the chloroform she was stopped by a strange inner voice saying "O coward, who used to dream of martyrdom, and cannot bear a few short years of pain". The same strange voice she heard when she was very much disturbed and could not find peace anywhere before embracing Theosophy. That inner voice directed her path from Atheism to Theoisim. The voice said: "Are you willing to give up anything for the sake of truth?" She said aloud "Yes Lord". Then the voice informed her quietly, "in a short time you will know it", p. 340.

myself against her constant forgetfulness and her characteristic inability to admit herself to be mistaken...my experience inclines me to the belief that Mrs Besant when she changes her mental attitude, forgets much of what she thought and said under the influence of a prior state of consciousness. (167)

But it is really difficult to believe that Mrs Besant who led so many movements could forget the next moment what she said or believed earlier. She was proud no doubt; and sometimes her pride might have prevented her to admit openly but she could not forget. Perhaps she trained herself in the same manner in order to devote herself whole-heartedly for the cause she championed. A completely new idea could not be attained with success unless one could meddle in it absolutely with full devotion and genuineness of conviction. She knew the art of erasing out the past with the advent of a fresh belief under the change of circumstances. This change was found in her private life also. After embracing theosophy Hinduism attracted her most and she wanted to be a true Hindu. Immediately after coming to India she lived in her daily life as a Indian Yogi (sanyasini):

She wore Indian dress, ate according to strict Hindu rules, meticulously followed the Hindu regulations of cleanliness, and performed "puja", or the ritual of the religious ceremony as the most orthodox Brahman would perform it.... Her early enthusiasm even led her to preach the desirability of practising the four original Indian castes and adhering to their rules of segregation. (168)

Years passed by and her strict rigid Hinduism lessened day by day.

168 Ibid., p. 45.
by day. She urged for reforming Hindu society and advocated for purified Hinduism, as the only remedy for the regeneration of degenerating Indian nation. The socio-political condition of India and the crude reality changed her views more and more. Mrs Besant who stated that her only objective was spiritual and had no relation with politics was forced to look around with her latent political sagacity. Her spiritualism from then on was coloured with politics. To fulfil the divine purpose she thought one had to be practical and political minded. Her change was observed by the social reformer which wrote: "Mrs Besant is slowly coming round. The fit of spirituality is passing away, and she is opening her eyes to the hard facts which surround mankind in their Mundane existence". Mrs Annie Besant claimed that her love for Hinduism never surpassed theosophy. When a writer in the Indian Mirror warned her that for permanent results for the regeneration in India she must "exclusively identify herself with the Hindus, she replied that...no true theosophist could take up such an exclusive position". The light of theosophy which the calmed/unsatiated soul of Mrs Besant gradually directed her towards the right way. To a theosophist the Hindu and the Musalmán, the Hebrew and the Christian, the Parsee and the Buddhist are all equally brothers in the faith, welcome and beloved.


170 Ibid., p. 46.

171 For details see Annie Besant, "The Work of the Theosophical Society in India", For India's Uplift (2nd edition), p. 266.
The universality of theosophy rather than Hinduism prevailed over her and she enunciated the scheme of undenominational Indian university in place of denominational Hindu University. The universal approach of theosophy along with socio-political, economic and religious factors accelerated and prompted Mrs Besant to modify her previous scheme. The socio-political condition in India at the beginning of the twentieth century was passing through currents and cross currents. On the one hand the new awakening and political consciousness of the people perfumed the air with the spirit of nationalism. The atmosphere was electrified. The result of the Russo-Japanese war further inspired them with a new kind of enthusiasm. People thought, "the old time glory and greatness of Asia seemed destined to return the days of servitude to the West were over and the day of independence had dawned". In this momentous period when "a new chapter was being written in the book of the world's history", Mrs Annie Besant found the evil forces were silently working on all sides. Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty witnessed both the perfume of nationalism and the odour of separatism. Tara Chand rightly observes:

The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon marks a sharp turning point in Indian politics.... The sentiment of thankfulness and loyalty begin to evanescce and a sense of bitterness and humiliation and a longing for release from imperialist domination sweeps into the Indian mind. (174)


173 Ibid.

The more Lord Curzon attempted to check the national spirit by different reactionary measures, the more it roused and spread in the wider community. Lord Curzon threw the last arrow to break the unity and solidarity of the Indian people by publishing the scheme of partition of Bengal in December 1903. Mrs Besant was shocked to see how the religion, if it was exploited by mischievous forces, could be poisonous in society. The difference in religion between the two sects was about to threaten on the geographical, social, political and economic integrity of India. She noticed that the impending rupture between the two communities would compel her to gear backward from the divine mission of "rescuing India to her ancient freedom". Perhaps from then on she stopped to advocate for a sectional, denominational university and stopped dreaming for a Hindu University of her own.

The birth of the Muslim League which aspired for their separate entity and a guarantee of minority rights in different fields and the growing sense of separatism was revealed fully with the time. She observed that the British "Kiss and Kick" policy was followed not only in the political arena, it did not spare even the educational world. The educated Muslims were patted at their back by sanctioning liberal grants and favours for their sectarian institutions. Lord Curzon encouraged the Muslims indirectly for a separate Muslim University at Aligarh. Thus 'Divide at Impera' was at full sight in different activities:

3 December 1903, after the publication of the scheme of partition of Bengal. For details see Amales Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*, p. 94.
of the British Government. The antagonism between the two communities was naked and ugly when the Muslim showed cold shoulder in the anti-partition movement of nation and apathy towards participation in the Swadeshi movement. In this critical moment the Hindu reactionary forces were not silent. The Shivaji celebration, cow protection movement, Nagri Pracharni Sabha were at full swing. The agitation of a Muslim University for the Muslims alienated the Hindus also. The orthodox Hindu class of the United Provinces organized a counter-movement for a Hindu University. In the beginning of 1904 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya presented the nation, "a Hindu University Scheme" which was largely greeted by the Hindu reactionary forces. The cleavage became deeper and broader than ever. The vessel of National existence, a frail little thing had been sailing on the rough sea against the wind in a rough weather of religious intolerance. To steer safely through this critical time the well-wishers of the Nation in both the communities felt the emergency of setting the house in order against the dividing forces. Mrs Annie Besant who had an amount of tact, resourcefulness and perseverance decided to combat the forces and remove "the barriers between those who ought to be co-workers in the educational, social and political fields". She understood that

176 Native Newspapers Report (North Western Provinces), 1906. N.A.I.

177 Ibid.

178 Annie Besant in a lecture on "United India", For India's Uplift, p. 266.
different denominational universities plied with different faiths would not comply the role of unifier among the communities. The distinctive marks of each civilization and religion would be brought prominently forward and inculcate the spirit of separatism, sectarianism, sectionalism threatening the ship of nationality to be ship-wrecked on the rocks of religious hatred and religious suspicion. She strongly urged the necessity of drawing all together as Indians on a common platform in the bosom of a common alma mater through a national system of education where Mussalmans or Hindus must join hands as fellow citizens and work for the common country in the atmosphere of their own religion. A large number of people voiced the same. The Kanauj Punch of 15 September 1906 urged the need for a common university both for the Hindus and Mussalmans. Different native newspapers forwarded the favourable points for the union. Mrs Besant's political aim of founding a national university was also to bring together the Hindus and the Muslims was revealed in the curriculum of the proposed university where only Sanskrit and

180 Annie Besant, Builder of New India, p. 524.
181 Mrs Besant in Indian Review, August 1911, p. 612.
182 The Tribune, 18 January 1906.
183 Kanauj Punch, a weekly of Farrukhabad. NNWR (NWP & Oudh), 1906, N.A.I.
184 Union Gazette of 14 September 1906; The Zulqurnain (Badaun), 14 September 1906; The Rohilkhand Gazette (Bareilly), 16 September 1906. See NNWR (NWP & Oudh), 1906. N.A.I.
Arabic were encouraged. She frankly admitted: "My purpose is the drawing together of Musalmans and Hindus...." She also was prepared to fight back against the class-factionalism in each community, through this university.

Though the socio-political condition of India played a significant role in Mrs Besant's mind in formulating the plan of a National University, theosophical teaching widened her vision. She looked around and found that there were widely spread, divergent educational institutions under local or national control in which religious and moral instruction form part of the educational curriculum. She observed:

In India Muhammadans have Aligarh College; the Hindus have the Central Hindu College at Benares; the Shri Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar; the Hindu College, Delhi, while the Nizam and Maharaja of Mysore, Alwar, Kishangarh and others have introduced religious teaching into their state schools. The Arya Samaj has its college at Lahore, its Gurukul for boys, and a number of schools.... (186)

To combine these disconnected and disjointed efforts and to lead the spreading movement Mrs Besant urged the necessity of an undenominational university which was natural and inevitable to crown the movement. She noticed that "the time for such crowning seems to have come".

Another factor which moulded Mrs Annie Besant's thinking for an undenominational university instead of denominational one was perhaps the economic cause. Her principle of "touch not the

185 Annie Besant, Builder of New India, p. 524.
186 Indian Review, August 1911, p. 612.
187 Ibid.
king's penny" in educational matters, always echoed in her mind. At the same breath, it became clear to her that to found different denominational universities in different parts of India entirely on private endowments was very difficult, when the people were not unanimous to embark upon the costly scheme of national universities. They wanted that all the money should be used for the purpose of "swadeshism". The people did not deny the advantages of National Universities but in the then present economic state of the country a section of people considered the claim of Swadeshism higher and more immediate need than any other things. For the profound and passionate influence of Swadeshi movement on people's mind Mrs Besant perhaps dropped the idea of different denominational universities or of five national universities and evoked the nation to start with only one National University at Banaras, the seat of ancient civilization and religion.

The religious zeal of Mrs. Besant which always played a significant role in the life inspired her to make an experiment which would combine all faiths and give birth of a World Religion, placing Hinduism amidst the Sister faith. She felt the necessity of a reformed Hinduism which should no longer stand apart in social isolation. In her university of India she proposed to introduce different parallel religions with the hope that by comparing different religions, the people would come to know the basic truth - that all the roads lead to the same divine goal. Such a scope of experimentation which would combine the religious,
educational, social, economic and political purposes she found "lies before India and before India alone among the nations of the world" because "in India all the world's faith are planted". The method of wielding which she wanted was not by merger of all varying beliefs into one but by the theosophical recognition of the spiritual unity of all religions. Bimming with the gleam of success Mrs Besant thought that the victory would bring a religion its noblest and mightiest triumph, and the brotherhood of man its grandest and noblest example. In the world - India would be placed on the supreme position as the religious teacher.

She expressed her dream in a lecture:

If India is to be the spiritual light of the future, in her must be focussed the light that comes from every faith, until in the prism of India they are all united into the one light which shall flood with sun light the world, and all lights shall blend in the Divine Wisdom. That is our work... (191)

Mrs Besant's loyalty to British Crown tended to chalk out a plan for union between the races. She found that the differences of interest between one race and other was at full length. The mist of race prejudices had so blinded eyes that the various races looked down upon the other as intruders and monsters. But the undenominational university of India would take them to feel that it was one of its kind and embraced it as a fellow countryman
and brother. She became more hopeful about the success of the university of India being undenominational in character, supported by all faiths and people. She knew that if the demand was strong and widespread enough supported by the people of all classes, creeds and faiths the government of India would not be able to deny it. Lastly she did not want to earn opposition of the Government of India by violating the recommendations of the University's Commission which advised against the emergence of denominational universities, disrespecting government's policy of religious neutrality. Her devotion to progress towards constitutional methods was implied in formulating the undenominational character of her university.

All these factors directly and indirectly immediate and remote interacted in Mrs Besant's mind which resulted in a swift change from denominational to undenominational, a switch over from a Hindu University to a National Indian University. George Bernard Shaw who had a keen insight perfectly analyzed Mrs Besant, when he wrote:

Mrs Besant is a woman of swift decisions. . . . she always came into a movement with a bound and was preaching the new faith before the astonished spectators had the least suspicion that the old one was shaken. . . . (193)

Her swift transition was not heard by the public but the British diplomacy did not fail to follow it. They smelled something fishy when the scheme for a university of India was presented before them.

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193 Bernard Shaw, "Mrs Besant's Passage Through Fabian Socialism", in Annie Besant Centenary Book, p. 17.
MRS Besant's University of India was a sweeping sensational project, both for the Indian people and the British Government in India. The objects of the new educational venture were well-defined. It was to impart and promote education, literary, artistic, and scientific, as well as technical, commercial and professional, on national lines and under national control, not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the government system of collegiate education attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, and designed to incorporate with the best oriented ideals of life and thought, the best assimilable ideals of the West, and to inspire students with a genuine love for and a real desire to serve the country. To promote and encourage the study as one best calculated to develop the material resources of the country and to satisfy its pressing wants.

The principal feature of the University was to be the recognition of "religion and ethics as integral part of a true education", that is, each student should be instructed according to his own faith. The other special features which she intended to enforce for her new University were first it would be accessible to all with as little of restrictions as possible; secondly it should affiliate both denominational or undenominational educational institutions; thirdly moderate and universal scale of fees; and finally there should be no age limit for matriculations. Though Mrs Besant in her Calcutta lecture of January 1906
considered that the government refusal to recognize the institution should not be regarded as a serious obstacle to the establishment of the proposed university, in reality she had no intention to contemplate the government opposition. On the contrary, she followed the same "middle course policy" as she maintained in governing the Central Hindu College. She preferred to secure the right step by step through the constitutional method. Mrs Besant correctly anticipated that the British Government in India would not accept the terms and conditions of the National University and would entertain bureaucratic opposition. So she did not approach the Viceroy of India directly but wanted to put pressure indirectly from the highest authority - His Majesty the King Emperor through the Prince of Wales in the form of a Royal Charter - a special charter. The Royal Charter was essentially to create a university empowered to grant degrees, to found, inspect and affiliate colleges and so on, without any limitation of the area entirely independent of the system of university education as existing in this country. If the charter was granted, the Government of India would be asked to assist the institution and claims of this sort would be more difficult to resist by reason of the scheme having received Royal recogni-

194 The Commissioner of the Benares division wrote in his fortnightly demi-official letter, dated 2. September 1911 "Mrs Besant and others have sought assiduously that it is generally possible to get what is desired by going straight to the highest authorities and to sympathizers in England". Education, A Proceedings, March 1912, Nos. 54-59, p. 17.

195 Education, A Proceedings, January 1911, Nos. 76-77.
Royal Charter, if it was granted, would evaporate all the oppositions in general and in particular. So she did not publicise her movements in this direction either to the Government of India or to the Indian people. She decided to place the project before the public with the Royal approval. Even, she had communicated nothing on the subject to the Hindu College professors. With this object in view she proposed His Majesty the King Emperor as patron and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as vice-patron of the proposed University of India. No place of Viceroy was mentioned in her scheme for Indian University, not even the post of a Governor or Chancellor was offered to him. Mrs Besant had a high hope that the Prince of Wales who had already expressed his high impression by presenting an autographed portrait to her for the Central Hindu College, would favour her scheme. She revealed her strong loyalty to the British Crown when the Royal Highness with his consort visited India in 1906. India, at that time, was passing through her stormy dark days coloured with anti-partition movement. The people of India boycotted the Prince and Princess of Wales and led violent hostile demonstrations. But Mrs Besant, ignoring the public psychology cordially welcomed them to visit the Central Hindu College

196 Giles, officiating Director General of Education wrote in a note on 9 November 1907, that he met the Secretary to the Governing Body of the Central Hindu College, one of the trustees and a Parse professor who assured him that the scheme had not yet been placed before them in any definite stage. *Education Department, B Proceedings*, February 1908, No. 23.

197 Mrs Besant in this respect followed the example of the University of Wales.
and arranged a magnificent reception. The Prince was highly moved and requested Mrs Annie Besant to write her name in the royal private autograph book. Moreover, she and other principal members of the college staff were invited to attend the royal reception. But in spite of her staunch loyalty to the British Raj her ambitious design for a Royal Charter directly sanctioned by His Majesty the King Emperor through the Prince of Wales was futile. The Prince of Wales stated his inability to violate the constitutional obligation for the colonial countries which prior to any sanction by His Majesty the King Emperor, enforced Secretary of States' approval based on Viceroy's recommendation. Mrs Besant personally approached the Secretary of State on Wednesday, the 24 July 1907 at London. But he also declined and stated that in spite of his genuine sympathy, he could not give it any official support unless Viceroy approved it. Mrs Besant's unwillingness to approach the Government of India in order to avoid complications did not stand. She submitted the project on 26 July 1907 to the Viceroy of India through his Private Secretary Mr Dunlop Smith and proceeded constitutionally to receive Viceroy's recommendation to the scheme. And thus, reluctantly she was entangled into the bottleneck of British Indian bureaucratic opposition and the battle cry began.

Mrs Annie Besant's petition to the Viceroy for the recommendation of the sanction of a Royal Charter was a brilliant

document of her multi-facet talents of a human character. She left no argument unturned in order to rationalize the same. Her past political background came to her help. The petition referred to the socio-political condition of India troubled with anti-partition agitation and boycott movement which emerged out a new group of extremists: an anti-government party. The Extremists demanded the total expulsion of the alien government. Those "enemies" of the British Government, Mrs Besant mentioned, were very active to utilize the people's discontent for their own purpose, turning it into a hostile movement against the British Government in India. In this present political turmoil she warned the disapproval for a Royal Charter "a legitimate wish of Indians to educate their sons in their own faiths" would enable the enemies a scope to make the issue "a stalking horse for politics".

On the other hand, Mrs Besant emphasized the benefits and advantages the government would receive if the Charter were granted. She stated that it would lead to some "positive steps" to bring back the solidarity and strength of the British Empire by enlisting loyalty and gratitude of the Indian people, which, ultimately would generate peace in India. Thus, as she pointed out, an enormous scope of building "a strong bulwark of the empire" was hidden in this simple prayer.

Mrs Annie Besant's petition contained some ego-satisfying phrases which mentioned Lord Minto's mounting interest in educational work which had "emboldened" her to hope for the Viceroy's

199 Education Department, B Proceedings, February 1908,
goodwill in her new venture. In a private note dated 26 July 1907, she praised Lord Minto as "a generous and sympathetic" ruler and regretted because he was reaping forcibly the results of her predecessors' policy. Mrs Annie Besant as a great humanist knew the soft corner of human psychology for fame. To be remembered long by the people and to "enshrine in their hearts" was a common desire of all the people in general and the Governor Generals in particular, whose tenure was only for five years. She advocated to mark Lord Minto's rule with the formal sanction of the petition for a Royal Charter which would make him immortal in the memory of Indians. In the same petition, Mrs Besant did not forget to write that the Prince of Wales and the Secretary of States were quite willing and sympathetic towards her 'mightiest enterprise'. Last of all, Mrs Annie Besant to be on the safe side, presuming Government's afraid of political activities in the educational institution guaranteed that the future university of India would follow the footsteps of the Central Hindu College which stood against the mixing up of students in political agitation and referred its loyalty which impressed even His Majesty Himself. She wrote: "Our nine years of such work in Benares are our guarantee".

Lord Minto was carried away by all the arguments of Mrs Annie Besant. Personally he was very much pleased with her, particularly the political aspect of the scheme appealed him

200 Mrs Besant's petition for Royal Charter. Education Department, B. Proceedings, February 1908, No. 23.

201 Ibid.
tremendously, along with others. But he was not the single man though the key-man, to approve something since his Council and other members played a great role in the administration. Mrs Annie Besant's project for the "University of India" faced the first hurdle of British Administrative, bureaucratic system to receive the Viceroy's recommendation for the Royal Charter. It not only scrutinized the scheme itself but they verified Mrs Besant's personality also - in the past and present perspective and they passed their final verdict.

IX

RESPONSE AND REACTION OF THE RAJ

The British attitude towards Mrs Annie Besant differed from time to time viewed from different perspectives. Her double loyalty to the British Crown and India often confused both the British Government and the Indian people and breathed hot and cold against her activities at the same time. Her various political activities in England were always against the established order and automatically annoyed the British Government. Mrs Annie Besant denied her English birth in London and was very much proud of her Irish blood. She really lamented when she said that "...it has always been somewhat of a grievance to me that I was born in London, 'within the sound of Bow bells'", when three quarters of my blood and all my heart are Irish.

202 Annie Besant from her mother's side was purely an Irish. But from her father's side her grandmother was Irish and grandfather - an Englishman.

Her spirit of liberty and nationalism was kindled in her heart with the freedom movement of Ireland. She took a leading part in the Irish Home Rule agitation along with Bradlaugh. In the late seventies of the nineteenth century when the Russo-Turkish struggle threatened to engross Great Britain into war, she supported Gladstonian policy against the criminal folly of Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues along with the radicals. In 1875, she opposed the grant of huge amount of money for expenses of royal visit to India as the country was too poor to afford the expenses. She also criticized the policy of the British Government over the colonies in India and Afghanistan. In 1878 she published a book entitled England, India and Afghanistan where she unveiled the hypocritical mask of British Government as saviour of India and exposed the real naked nature of lust and greed of British exploitation and urged for the remedy of the crimes.

Mrs Annie Besant claimed that in politics, she worked more in England for the recognition of the Rights of India than directly in India itself. In 1880-1881 she was absorbed into the struggle battled by Charles Bradlaugh to protect his right in Parliament. She was a leading speaker and agitator for the

204 Mrs Besant wrote an article "Coercion in Ireland and its Results", exposing the wrongs done under the Act which was reprinted as a Pamphlet and had a vast circulation. For details see Annie Besant, An Autobiography, pp. 277-80.

205 Annie Besant, The Future of Indian Politics, p. 35.

206 Bradlaugh though elected was not permitted to sit in Parliament as he denied to take oath of allegiance.
starving East End Dockers and the unemployed match-stick girl and championed the right of free speech in London's Forum and the right of woman. All these roles of Mrs. Besant and her writings, full of sharp criticisms against government policies were not palatable to the British Raj. Her new faith towards spiritualism relieved her opponents as well as the British Government. But after coming to India her speeches and writings for the regeneration of India made the British sceptical about her real purpose. At last Mrs. Besant's declaration that her purpose of coming to India was purely religious and educational, saved her from the direct British hostility. Only Valentine Chirol complained that Hindu apathy towards Western civilization was due to Mrs. Besant. He says:

...Mrs Annie Besant..., has openly proclaimed her faith in the superiority of the whole Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West. Is it surprising that Hindus should turn their backs upon our civilization,... when a European of highly trained intellectual power, and with an extraordinary gift of eloquence, comes and tells them that it is they who possess, and have from all times possessed, the key to supreme wisdom; that their Gods, their philosophy, their morality, are on a higher plane of thought than the West has ever reached? (208)

In spite of Chirol's warning the economic interest made them engrossed in such a way that they did not bother for cultural or religious supremacy unless it was connected with the economic

207 For details see John Saville in A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant, or Annie Besant in Essays Political and Social.

208 Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, p. 29.
interest and reached to the breaking point.

Despite her claim of India as "Homeland", her unswerving allegiance towards the British Raj, her European birth, her loyalty to discipline, law, organization and authority, her short stay in India, her inability to speak the Indian vernaculars and her association entirely among educated English speaking Hindus, forbid some English officers to think her as an Indian patriot. Meston wrote to Chelmsford "Mrs Besant, it is true, was deliberately offensive more than once, but not nearly so poisonous". Mrs Besant also knew it very well that on the ground of her white skin she was allowed to say things which might be dangerous for Indians to say. She was not opposed by the British Government in India in founding her the Central Hindu College due to several reasons other than personal. First, education under private enterprise was encouraged as a government policy. Secondly, the moral and religious teachings were favoured by the government as they had experience and faith in it. Thirdly, they were convinced that the absence of moral and religious education had given birth to the political unrest in India. They welcomed religious and moral education more to divert the people's mind from politics by its overwhelming,

209 Mrs Besant could not tolerate the Indian summer and used to avoid it by going abroad.

210 Meston to Chelmsford, 11 January 1917. *Meston Papers*, MCFR 1. NMML.

211 An Address over the Chittoor District Conference where Mrs Annie Besant presided. Fortnightly Reports on the internal situation received from all the provinces, March 1916. *Home Department (Political), Deposit Proceedings*, April 1916, No. 19. N.A.I.
intoxicated influence on human mind and would teach the students their duty towards government. Fourthly, the revival of Hindu civilization and their claim of superiority to other religion, which antagonized and made the Muslims afraid tended to nourish the famous, favourite British policy of 'Divide and rule'. Last but not the least, the European teachers in the staff of the Central Hindu College made some of the British officers very happy.

On the other hand, Mrs Besant's regret for her birth in England and pride for Irish blood and later her description of herself as a "Hindu", call for awakening the national spirit, anti-Christian missionary utterances and the foundation of a rival institution against it turned her as a renegade - the enemy of Christians in the eyes of some British officers. The independent spirit of the institution, refusing government aid and the special features of the college made some of them suspicious. Lord MacDonnell, the then Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces was one of them. He looked on the new enterprise with so much suspicion that, he particularly ordered that no encouragement was to be given to it. Its bitterness prohibited him to visit the College and went up to that extent that he persuaded Lord Curzon not to visit the College when he came at Banaras at the end of 1899. The hostile attitude towards Mrs Besant and

212 The Rahbar (Moradabad), 28 May 1911, suspected that the active participation of students in political disturbances had led government to consider the advisibility of introducing religious and moral education in Indian Schools. NNWR (U.P.), January-June 1911. N.A.I.

her new enterprise came to an end with the coming of Sir James La-Touche, the new Lt. Governor of the United Provinces, an admirer of Mrs Besant. He visited and submitted a favourable report on the basis of which the Universities Commission recommended for the affiliation to the Allahabad University. He was so much pleased with Mrs Besant that he granted her some land which she was very anxious to add to the College. Even Sir Harcourt Butler who opposed tooth and nail against Mrs Besant's scheme of the "University of India" and used the adjectives like "unreliable", "unscrupulous", "irresponsible", against Mrs Besant praised her enthusiasm to rise above casteism. Lord Curzon expressed his sympathy in writing to Mrs Besant. Mrs Annie Besant's loyalty was best shown, during the viceroyalty of Lord Minto in the era of the partition of Bengal. The Lt. Governor of the Provinces informed the Viceroy:

We are not troubled here by any reflux of the agitation...in the provinces...Mrs Besant,... took up a firm position, and forbade the students of the college to take part in political controversy. (217)

She also arranged a warm reception for the Prince and Princess of Wales ignoring the hostile demonstrations against their visit

215 Butler to His Mother dated 31 July 1903. Butler Papers, MCFR 2, vol. 6. NMML.
217 From La Touche, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces to Minto, the Viceroy, 28 November 1905. Minto Papers, MCFR 1. N.A.I.
in India. Minto, a strong optimist who believed that the "British Raj will not disappear in India as long as the British race remains what it is" and was ready to fight hard for the British Raj, was highly impressed by her firm attitude and her role as a defender of law, order and discipline. Mrs Besant's educational philosophy was highly appreciated by him. He had a strong faith in moral and religious education, and rightly looked through the "dangers of educational maladministration and the misappropriation of advantages" of secular education "with much useless reading prescribed by them" which stared at the continuance of British rule in India. But he was well aware of the fact that due to multi-religions, cultures, traditions of Indian humanity, the government could do nothing but to follow strict neutrality towards religions. So he encouraged religious education under private enterprise. He was in favour of reforms on the belief that "if they were thoughtfully introduced may help to render its administration happy". Specially

218 The Royal visit was in March 1905.

219 Minto to Morley, 27 May 1908. Morley Papers, MCFR 1. NMML.

220 Ibid.

221 Viceroy's speech to the orthodox Hindu deputation. Morley Papers. Ibid.

222 Minto to Morley, 19 March 1908. Ibid.

223 Viceroy's speech, Ibid.


225 Viceroy's Letter to Morley, 27 May 1908, Ibid.
he was interested to make friends with the influential educated class with moderate leaning by satisfying them through concessions in form of reforms. In Mrs Besant's scheme he saw the silver lining in the dark phase of educational problem, which was the great question of the hour and was sure to wax greater and greater as time goes on. When Mrs Besant asked for an interview with Viceroy to pursue the scheme of the "University of India" on 1 January 1908, the latter invited her to a lunch on 10 January 1908. A personal relation had already developed between the two. After referring to His Royal Highness' and the Secretary of States' favourable attitude towards the scheme, Mrs Besant now directly appealed to him for its consideration. He did not forget Secretary of States' writings after the Royal visit to India, which suggested that His Highness wanted to show "wider sympathy" to the Indian people. He was eager to erase out the bitter memories of the "disagreeable pill" of the partition of Bengal, somehow, Mrs Besant's scheme provided him an 226 Minto to Morley, 27 May 1910, MCFR 3.
227 Morley once wrote to Minto that Nobody else than he (Minto) could feel more strongly "the great question of the hour", the educational problem in India. Morley to Minto dated 1 April 1910, Ibid.
228 Education Department, D. Proceedings, June 1909, No. 12.
229 Mrs Besant's popularity, influence and people of India's treatment to her as an Indian attracted Lord Minto's attention. Immediately after his coming, Lady Minto invited her in a 'quiet quietly lunch' and wanted to know from Mrs Besant how to reach the hearts of the Indian people. Mrs Besant suggested only "sympathy". The Central Hindu College Magazine, December 1911.
opportunity to make a change in the educational system of India. He promised, as Mrs Besant claimed, that "he would do all in his power to support it". Further she claimed that the Viceroy also gave her the permission to state publicly what he said.

When the report of the officiating Director General of Education, E. Giles, and the note of the Foreign Secretary and opinions of other members of the Council along with the Home Department reached him, he was shocked to see that most of them were against the approval of the scheme, as it was an "educationally unsound and politically dangerous" project. He immediately realized his folly of commitment to Mrs Besant and decided to follow a policy which says "silence is golden". He neither committed nor rejected the scheme but decided to "wait and see". Decision was taken not to reply to Mrs Besant's petition. The whole matter was tied by the red tape of British bureaucracy for three years.

When Mrs Besant publicly declared Lord Minto's promise towards the scheme through a letter to the press and personally to individuals to popularize her "mightiest enterprise" so as to earn the active co-operation of wealthy, influential and educated class, Minto was in a tight corner. Neither he could refuse publicly nor could he accept it officially as a Viceroy such a controversial issue, dealing with "religion covered with politics'
He had no other alternative but to deny officially his promise towards the scheme. To save the face Dunlop-Smith, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, who was instrumental to develop the cordial relationship between the Viceroy and the Indian Nationalist leaders, wrote to H.A. Stuart a civil servant, and a Secretary of the Government of India, "The Viceroy cannot remember the exact words he used but so far as his recollection goes he said that the attitude of the Government of India would be one of benevolent neutrality". In the same correspondence he also wrote: "The Viceroy does not think it is worthwhile contradicting the statement in Amrita Bazar Patrika".

Minto's postponement of the visit to the Central Hindu College which was due on December 1908, his silence to the proposal without rejecting it totally, his decision not to contradict publicly Mrs Besant's utterances through press about Viceroy's promise and his respect towards the 'grand old lady' even after the incident strongly suggest that Mrs Besant was true to her public statement about Viceroy's promise. Minto never doubted about her "perfectly honest intention" and also wrote in a note on 2 April 1910: "I believe Mrs Besant to be perfectly loyal in her intentions, but she is an enthusiast who is carried away by her own ideas which are sometimes positively dangerous". Mrs

234 Education Department, B. Proceedings, February 1908, No. 23.
237 Ibid.
Besant was an important guest in almost all the social gatherings invited by the Viceroy of India and was paid special attention. He was quite friendly with Mrs Besant. Her popularity among the Indian people attracted him most. Sir Harcourt Butler suspected Lord Minto and Dunlop Smith's attitude towards the scheme and remarked in a private letter "...either Minto or Dunlop Smith had committed to that irresponsible lady". Again, when the Hindu University movement was going to be started by Maharaja of Darbhanga under the British instruction, Butler very confidentially wrote to his mother that "...it will make short work of Dunlop's friend...Mrs Besant". And finally when the scheme was knocked out by the Anglo-Indian conspiracy Butler remarked "...Dunlop Smith and her friends must feel rather small" These remarks are enough reasons to be convinced that Lord Minto personally encouraged Mrs Annie Besant and assured his support in it. On the other hand, a personality like Mrs Besant who tried to follow truth throughout her life and sacrificed everything for it could not distort Viceroy's statement. Apart from emotional reasons it was not practically possible for an individual to incur the Viceroy's wrath and antagonism by publicly

238 Mrs Besant was invited to attend the Durbar in 1909 where she was welcomed by Lady Minto... Lord Minto crossed the room to attend her and talked for ten minutes. A.H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant, p. 115.

239 See f.n. no. 229.

240 Butler to Lady Griffin, 28 January 1911. Butler Papers, MCFR 7. NMML.

241 Butler to Mother, 12 October 1911, Ibid., MCFR 2.
declaring a false statement when she was waiting upon a favour-
able reply from the Viceroy.

The University of India project peeped again into the
Viceroy's Council from the government file when Mrs Besant sent
another petition in October 1910, with more signatures of res-
pectable influential persons for some alterations and amplifica-
tions in respect of the detailed functions of the University.
Sir Harcourt Butler, the Education Member of the Council being
fully aware of Lord Minto's feeling towards it wanted to make
delay - until the tenure of Lord Minto's viceroyalty. He
believed that "...one could kill the movement by delay". But-
ler was right in his planning. Lord Minto's viceroyalty came to
an end. Minto somehow, could tactfully manage to slip over the
matter and played a double role. He did not hurt Mrs Besant's
sentiment by rejecting it off-hand, under whose portrait the
Central Hindu College authorities wrote: "Who laid in India the
foundation of self-government within the Empire". Nor he viola-
ted the British interest as a Viceroy.

Mrs Besant was all along under the impression that her
petition was sent up to the Secretary of State for India from the
Viceroy either in September or October in 1910. Meanwhile, the


243 Mrs Besant claimed in a letter to the Secretary of State
dated 8 September 1911, that the Viceroy in a personal
letter and his private secretary in an official letter
informed Mrs Besant that her petition was forwarded to the
Secretary of State. She also stated that even after
Minto's retirement he was keenly interested in the scheme
and was eager to talk about it with the Secretary of State.
Mrs Besant to Secretary of States, 3 September 1911,
Education Department, A. Proceedings, March 1912, Nos. 54-
59.
political activities of the Central Hindu College aroused suspicion in the British mind. The students' willingness to welcome Bepin Chandra Pal on his release from jail in March 1908, which were nothing but the medium of political propaganda. Their writings in the Central Hindu College Magazine, the political teachings through mock parliaments, debates and political discussions; the seditious pamphlets which were discovered made the College a spot for future trouble and disaster to British rule.

Sir J.P. Hewett, the Lieutenant Governor of the Provinces in a report declared the College as "the worst college in the jurisdiction of the university of Allahabad...at any time have to consider the question whether the continuance of its affiliation justifiable". Mrs Besant wrote to Gokhale that Sir John Hewett was violently hostile to her partly because of the 'Sons of India' movement, partly because she differ from him in disapproving harsh curtailment of Indian liberty and because he represented her independence.

Mrs Besant also came in for suspicion for her political outlook. Her intention to invite Lala Lajpat Rai to address the students of the Central Hindu College, Her "Order of the sons of India", a body for the political teachings to the students, her public utterances which eulogized the "Swadeshi movement" and

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244 The articles on Ram Das, Tilak, Lakshmibai with patriotic appeal were seen by the British Officers as seditious articles.


246 Annie Besant to Gokhale, 23 February 1910. Gokhale Papers, File No. 41. N.A.I.
national aspirations, her appeal to Europeans and Eurosians for better treatment with sympathy, equality and friendliness, made Mrs Besant as "the most dangerous element in the directorate of the Central Hindu College". Mrs Besant's scheme was strongly disapproved by the new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge who, on educational matters, was completely dependent on the Honourable member of Education, Sir Harcourt Butler. From the very beginning Butler had a strong negative attitude towards Mrs Besant. He was convinced that the Central Hindu College was a reaction to the Muslim College at Aligarh. Being a European, her protest, criticism, and condemnation against the government policies and against the Europeans proved the validity of British ill-treatment towards the Indians. He considered Mrs Besant's activities as improper, dangerous, irresponsible and mischievous. Moreover he wanted to have political control on the Hindu masses by pacifying the leading members of the community in the United Provinces. The orthodox Hindu University movement provided him an ideal opportunity. He planned to lead the movement according to his own choice and destroy Mrs Besant's influence by knocking out her scheme for the University of India.

Mrs Annie Besant was passing through a very critical period. She was very much disturbed with the internal troubles

Mrs Besant circulated 'An Appeal' protesting the behaviour of an Englishman who accused a Central Hindu College student and forced him to leave the compartment of the train, they were travelling together.

of the Central Hindu College and could not turn her proper attention to the scheme. In 1907 after Olcott's death, Mrs Annie Besant became the President of the Theosophical Society. The centre of her activities was transferred from Banaras to Adyar. She lost contacts with her friends and colleagues and her influence began to wane. Her absence provided for enemies - the orthodox Hindu group an opportunity to curb Mrs Besant's influence who envied her popularity, respect and power. They were afraid of the growing influence of Theosophy in the Central Hindu College and wanted to drive her out. Some facts prompted their actions which deteriorated the situation of the Central Hindu College. The attempt of Mrs Besant to establish the cult of J. Krishna Murti by the order of the Rising Sun led to serious friction in the management of the Central Hindu College which ultimately divided it into two groups. One headed by

249 The headquarters of the Theosophical Society were in Madras and "it became necessary for her to devote more time to that work...." Iqbal Masarir Gurtu Papers - Speeches "Mrs Besant and the Central Hindu College". NMML.

250 Sri Prakasa, Dr Bhagwan Das, pp. 49-50.

251 Pandit Ganga Prasad Verma made it no secret of the fact to Butler. Butler in a note on 28 September 1911. Education Department, A Proceedings, March 1912, Nos. 54-58

252 J. Krishna Murti commonly known an Alcyone was the son of a Deputy Collector in Madras. Mrs Besant adopted and brought up the child with proper education. He was represented by Mrs Besant as 'Avtar' the incarnation of God and future teacher of world religion. For details see Veritas's Mrs Besant and the Alcyone Case.

253 The order of the Rising Sun was started in 1911 for the promotion of the cult with Mrs Besant as the patroness but abolished in the same year.
Arundale, the theosophist group and the other by Dr Bhagwan Das and his brother Govinda Das, the Hindu group and the nearest colleague of Mrs Annie Besant. The trustees stopped "the order of the Rising Sun" for the time being. After some time they found Arundale and his group with the same avowed object secretly revived the same order in the name of "the order of the East". The orthodox group took it seriously and interpreted the order as an attempt to erect Mrs Besant's all-in-all power. The relation among the members was bitter to the highest extent. The shattered relation with the nearest friends and colleagues and the rift in the Central Hindu College were a great shock to Mrs Besant. She was at that time further troubled by a litigation case regarding her right on J. Krishna Murti proceeding between herself and his father, and by a case against Leadbeater on which her action on his defence was severely criticized.

The last straw on the camel's back was the financial stringency of the Central Hindu College. The external attacks by criticisms and condemnation and so many internal conflicts made her tired. Government's silence about her project but prompt favourable reply to the Muslim demand for a separate university made in May 1911, told her indirectly about government's disapproval for her scheme. The other two Hindu University movements made her more sceptical about the success of the project. The last blow came from the Muslims when the three

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254 Leadbeater was charged with homosexuality. Mrs Besant passed the verdict as "not guilty" for him.

255 The Leader, 9 February 1910.
representative members of Islam withdrew their support in order to strengthen their movement for a separate university.

She accepted the challenge of a "friendly rivalry" of the Mohammadan University and modified her scheme for a Teaching and Residential Hindu University under the name of the "Benares University". In a petition on 23 August 1911 from London, she remarked "India will possess two Universities, in one of which Hindu Culture and the other of which Mussalman Culture, would be the presiding spirit...freely open to men of all faiths". But the Government of India being extremely displeased with the political activities of the Central Hindu College in general and Mrs Annie Besant in particular informed the Secretary of State their inability to recommend the petition for Royal Charter. Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State who succeeded Lord Morley though personally supported Mrs Besant's scheme informed her Viceroy's negative attitude towards her scheme. On the other hand the Government of India attempted to have a strong control on the Hindu College utilizing its desperate condition due to internal dissensions and external attacks. They frankly disclosed their

256 Mrs Besant in a demi-official letter to the Viceroy proposed the revised petition and also agreed the inclusion of His Excellency the Viceroy, the Governors and Lt. Governors, as Governors of the proposed Hindu University with a limited power. Education Department, A Proceedings, July 1911, Nos. 141-53.

257 Secretary of State Lord Crewe wrote to Viceroy Lord Hardinge "I am rather taken by Mrs Besant's idea of a religious foundation for Hindu education". From Secretary of State Crewe to Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, dated 30 August 1911, Hardinge Papers, MCFR 15, No. 46, p. 97. NKML.

258 The Modern Review, March 1907, under the heading "Mrs Besant's Political Dicta" criticised Mrs Besant. She has not studied Indian history, Indian politics and Indian economics. As such, she should not express any opinion on Indian political questions....
intention to the orthodox leaders of the "Hindu University movement" that one of the most important conditions to shape the movement in reality was to make the Central Hindu College a nucleus to the proposed Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a shrewd politician snatched the golden opportunity to curb the theosophical influence as well as to fulfil his dream for a 'Hindu University' under his guidance. He was well acquainted with the Hindu members of the College, specially Dr Bhagwan Das. The Board of Trustees took a resolution on 6 August 1911 to join hands with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mrs Besant. Mrs Besant who wanted to live greatly not in pettiness or narrowness preferred to withdraw her petition for a Royal Charter in favour of a Hindu University under Malaviya. But her previous scheme for the University of India did not suffer the humiliation of rejection by the Government of India. Her petition was not officially forwarded to the Secretary of State. Her original idea for a Residential Teaching Hindu University was revived. But she was not happy at all. The socio-political

259 The orthodox Hindu group did not owe to Mrs Besant. They did not admit even that Mrs Besant was liberal on the contrary they regarded Mrs Besant as standing for superstition and reactionary tendencies. But at the same time accepted the fact that the success of Malaviya's scheme depended on the amalgamation and having the Central Hindu College as a nucleus for the new University (which amalgamation only can secure). The Leader, 18 May 1911. NMML.

260 The Advocate (Lucknow) of 23 April 1911, commenting on the statement issued by Mrs Annie Besant on her University scheme pointed out that it was some what inconsistent with the one published in the April number of the Theosophist, but went on to explain that the change in her opinion was due to the change in the state of affairs with that of the Hon'ble Pandit Malaviya, and have one University for Hindus at Banaras, a teaching University. UNWR (U.P.), January-June 1911. N.A.I.
condition coloured with separatism threatened her dream for a united India. The divine purpose to rescue India's ancient freedom and glory was moving far away from the reality. Her heart wept in blood which was expressed in one of her speeches:

I formulated a scheme for an Indian University, the Board of Trustees formed of leading men of the great faiths existing in India. It was well on its way, when Aligarh University was mooted. My Mussalman trustees left the general scheme for the denominational. My Hindu members, when the Hindu University sprang up as a counterblast to the Mussalman, feared that the wider scheme would meet with no support in the clash of educational parties. I withdrew it and agreed to the handing over of the Central Hindu College to the proposed Hindu University. Nonetheless, the wider scheme would have served United India as the denominational schemes will not. (261)

Mrs Annie Besant's feelings were those of a frustrated mother who could not attain full success in implementing her pet educational project. She was subdued by the opposite forces for the time being but her educational zeal was not totally crushed. She did not stop her attempt to search the ideal means to achieve India's unity and a united nation. She formed a Theosophical Educational Trust and opened a Theosophical Institution purely on educational lines. Its expansion and popularity became a headache for the authorities of the Central Hindu College.

X

IN RETROSPECT

Mrs Besant's "mightiest enterprise", the University of

261 Annie Besant, United India: Speeches and Writings of Annie Besant, p. 224.
India was not forwarded to the Secretary of State from the Viceroy's Council for many reasons. It is true that the Council apparently stated that the proposed University was unnecessary, since it was free from all government control and backed by the Theosophical Society and its supporters. However, the causes for such disapproval were deeper than they seem to appear. Psychologically, they were suffering from an acute inferiority complex regarding the prevailing educational system—a problem in the country, created by themselves. They were well aware of the defects but were not ready to admit these as pointed out by an outsider like Mrs Annie Besant who claimed herself a Hindu. The bureaucracy realized that she attempted to foresake the British control from education and implant a national system side by side with the existing Universities. To approve the scheme was, therefore, suicidal for the existing Universities created by the British Raj. They apprehended that the proposed University would attract most of the unaided private institutions and other future institutions, weakening the existing Universities. They preferred to pursue laissez faire policy in education rather than accepting Besant's scheme. Mrs Besant's University of India though apparently undenominational and inconsistent with her previous appeal to 'Hinduism as the only regenerating force in India' was to them distinctly Hindu biased with majority of Brahmin

262 Education Department. A Proceedings, July 1911, Nos. 141-53.

lawyer as supporter and members of trustees. It created a
great alarm in the British mind. Besides the absence of govern-
ment control, the dropping of Viceroy's name from the project
indicated a 'grave political danger' to His Excellency, the
Viceroy and His Council.

The project had a strong resemblance with the Bengal
National Council of Education except student’s participation in
political movements which made them afraid. They apprehended
that in course of time the institution would turn into a hot-bed
of sedition and politics just like the Braja Mohan College at
Barisal. Added to British hostility which brought about the
downfall of the movement, Mrs Besant’s project was not properly
represented by all faiths and was not well supported by the
people’s demand which could force the government to reconcile.
Even the theosophists did not support her whole-heartedly which
was capitalized by the orthodox Hindus against her. She
intended to move from the highest authority to downwards, from
His Majesty to the people directly, which antagonized the bureau-
cracy as well as the different sections of people. She thought

264 In the first petition of 1907 out of nine members six
and in the petition of 1911 out of seventeen members
sixteen were associated with Legal Department.

265 Education Department, A Proceedings, January 1911,
Nos. 76-77.

266 See Mrs Besant’s Scheme.

267 The Jadharma Pracharak (Kangri Bijnor), 10 May 1911
referred her as a 'clever woman' and remarked that she
had lost the confidence of some of her fellow-workers.
that the Royal Charter, if granted, would evaporate all the oppositions. She was over-confident about the movement which refrained her from approaching the government of India at first consulting with her colleagues and influential members of different classes along with the general support from the masses. She could not anticipate the possible antagonism and opposition from the orthodox Hindu class though it was very prominent. Even she could not earn genuine support and help from the signatories and other influential educationists... Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, a signatory and an influential person for example, when personally approached by S.H. Butler, was ashamed for his signature to the petition. He was against the proposal and urged the necessity for a very close government control. Rai Bahadur

268 Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in a note on 1 November 1907 reported that the Secretary to the Governing Body and other two members openly said that Mrs Besant had communicated nothing on the subject to them before placing it to Viceroy for recommendation for a Royal Charter. Confidential Simla Records, Home Department (Education), B Proceedings, February 1908, No. 23.

269 The Tribune of 7 January 1905 reported: "...this year's Congress, having had its sittings in a city like Bombay, give rise to a number of side-shows in various parts of the city.... The most notable of these was the Theistic Conference held in Prathana Samaj Mandir from 12 noon to 4 P.M.

As a protest against their gatherings of reformers the orthodox Hindus had their own gatherings. A large meeting was held in the Town Hall and was presided over by Goswami Devikanand. Addresses were delivered by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya of Allahabad and Pandit Din Dayal."

270 Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University from 1906-1914. He was also a judge of the Calcutta High Court; represented the University on the Bengal Council from 1889 to 1903; additional member of the Viceroy's Council as representing Bengal from 1903-1909; local member for Bengal in the University Commission in 1902.

271 Education Department, A Proceedings, March 1912, Nos. 54-59.
Pandit Sundarlal, declined flatly to sign it as he did not get the green signal from the British authority. Their self-centred attitude of opportunism weakened the movement to a great extent. Her anathema, of being born with a white body and a Hindu soul ostracised her both from the British as well as Indian society. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar rightly observed:

...it was unfortunately true that...a prejudice sprang up against her and she was regarded as a missionary of British imperialism, whilst some English politicians of the die-hard variety dubbed her a traitor to the land of her birth....(273)

Mrs Besant earnestly approached Gopal Krishna Gokhale with a request to join her movement and to be one of the representative Hindus which the latter declined. She was shocked but did not lose hope and expressed to Gokhale "...perhaps you will join us later; I wanted you very much at the beginning". All her hopes were futile.

The press also did not reflect in favour of the proposed University. The Hindu Patriot held that the movement was premature. The Tribune and Bombay Gazette were sceptical.

272 A renowned Lawyer; Vice-Chancellor of the Allahabad University and an influential person of the United Provinces.
273 C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dr Besant as a Comrade and a Leader, pp. 5-6.
274 Annie Besant to Gokhale, dated 31 March 1907, Gokhale Papers, File No. 41. Private Papers and Manuscript Section. N.A.I.
275 Annie Besant to Gokhale, 1 May 1907, Ibid.
276 The Hindu Patriot, 7 May 1910.
277 The Tribune, 8 May 1910.
278 The Bombay Gazette, 21 July 1910.
regarding the success of the movement. The Bengalee also did not support the movement enthusiastically.

The socio-political condition of the country with strong force of separatism vehemently opposed Mrs Besant's project which attempted to stop the huge bon-fire out of ever-burning flames of sectarianism. The impending rupture, which ultimately scarred the map of India between the Hindus and the Muslims, could have been avoided if her scheme was successful. The reactionary evil forces of Anglo-Indian conspiracy did not allow her to achieve the victory-pillar.

The April issue of the Sons of India (Banaras) contained the copy of a letter from Mrs Besant to the Theosophist (Madras) on her University scheme which she said, was in the hands of the government, "It may well be", remarked Mrs Besant, in the said letter, "that the Aga Khan's Muhammadan University scheme and the Hon'ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's Hindu University scheme will be preferred to mine, in which all religions were treated equally and the attempt was made to unite instead of divide.

It will be a sad day when such a splendid opportunity of uniting the Hindus and Muhammadans is ignored by the leaders of the Indian people".

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279 The Bengalee, 21 April 1910; 6 May 1910; Education Department, A Proceedings, January 1911, Nos. 76-77.

280 NNWR (U.P.), January to June 1911, p. 398.
Ajax crying for the light was rewarded by darkness in creating a unique and novel institution, resembling the country's special feature - 'Unity in Diversity' in the helm of higher education. Mrs Besant was to pay the bitter penalties of being the pioneer of a sensational, brilliant and magnificent project providing religious, educational, social, economic, physical and intellectual scope to the Indian youth. Yet the scheme of the Banaras Hindu University that was later forwarded by Malaviya and others seemed to reflect part of her aspiration, no doubt.

Mrs Annie Besant took the pen name "Ajax" from the statue "Ajax crying for light" in the crystal palace. The classical story goes that Ajax was gigantic in physique and of great valour but lowest in the intellectual capacity. In Trojan war when he lost his friend's body, he prayed to God for light and rescued the same. But ultimately he was defeated by Ulyssess. Gold placed wisdom before valour. G.M. Williams, The Passionate Pilgrim, pp. 54-55.