CONCLUSION

One of the oldest civilisations of the world developed in the river valleys of India, which attained a high level of excellence in every field. The Hindus and the Buddhists of ancient India organised systems of higher education, which had, in spite of obvious resemblances, fundamental differences originating from the philosophy of life on which the aims and organisation of their education were founded. Both the systems were highly efficient to serve the needs for which they were designed. Taxila and Nalanda, besides many others, were famous centres of higher learning of ancient India. The advent of Muslim rule introduced a new pattern of education from abroad suited to the requirements of Islam. Hindu and Buddhist learning declined with the Muslim conquest of India and Muslim education too decayed with the collapse of the Mughal empire.

The British rulers who succeeded the Muslims discovered the rich cultural treasures of ancient India. To conciliate the subject people and to serve the needs of administration, they revived the classical learning of the Hindus and the Muslims in the Oriental Colleges established by the Government. The policy of Orientalism with the
content of classical knowledge to be imparted through Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, failed to serve the changing needs of the new administration. The demand for English education became persistent. An educational controversy followed and eventually the classical system was replaced by English education consisting of Western knowledge to be communicated through the English language. Persian too was substituted by English as the language of administration.

Schools and colleges teaching English began to be established under official patronage, and the English education spread, as it became a source of employment in public and private services and of social status. A comprehensive scheme was recommended in 1854 by the Government to make the foundation of the English system wider and stronger. Under it the study of classical learning and vernaculars was given a subordinate position. In order to direct the new pattern of education the university of Calcutta was founded on the model of the London University, as also the Universities of Bombay and Madras.

With a far-flung jurisdiction stretching to Ceylon and Burma and including the whole of northern India as far as Kashmir and Assam in the east Calcutta University with
two main statutory functions, to hold examinations and to confer degrees, to discharge, faced, from the beginning, great problems of organisation and administration. It had accommodation sufficient for administrative work and to house the library and to hold examinations and convocations. The paucity of funds became a persistent problem. In spite of heavy odds the number of schools and colleges under the University increased being stimulated by public grants, and the number of students swelled far beyond the limits of efficient management. The demand for provision of postgraduate instruction under the direct control of the University became vocal.

The unplanned expansion of the University system in Bengal was, before long, followed by many deficiencies which have persisted through the succeeding decades; overwhelming number of over-increasing students in colleges, poor teaching, training and discipline, lack of necessary accommodation, equipment, library and laboratory, adequate staff, hostels and above all dearth of funds. As the number of overcrowded institutions increased the quality of education deteriorated.

The evils of the system multiplied and the Government of Curzon tried in vain to improve the standard of work in the Universities by exercising more official control and supervision over them. The Universities Act of
1904, based on the recommendations of the Commission of 1902, was the first legislative measure since 1857, to give the universities a new impulse and direction.

In spite of persisting setbacks the University of Calcutta grew and expanded. The function of instruction adopted by the University under the Act of 1904, led to the creation of post-graduate teaching departments and councils of post-graduate teaching, which brought in its wake many problems of administration and finance. Mainly for political reasons originating from the national movement launched by the Congress the relation of the University and its Colleges with the Government became strained and the financial assistance from public funds was not readily or sufficiently available. In consequence the University suffered a great financial strain. Yet the University refused to surrender its freedom of action.

The Calcutta University Commission appointed during the first World War recommended an elaborate scheme of re-construction for a teaching University of Calcutta by means of radical changes to vitalise every sphere of its activity. Though approved it was not implemented. Instead new bills to bring the University under more State control were proposed. But the University rejected the
bills of the Government. When in 1921 Education became a provincial subject, Calcutta University was transferred from the control of the Government of India to the Government of Bengal. The relation of the University with the provincial government became worse and the fight for University autonomy went on to the irritation of the Government.

Calcutta University with its heavy load of problems aggravated by the nagging attitude of the Government dragged on limping. The second World War and the end of the British rule with the partition of the sub-continent followed by swelling influxes of refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) caused a temporary collapse of the normal course of life in West Bengal and specially at Calcutta and the University with all its institutions were flung into the mighty vortex of an unprecedented catastrophe. Independence came and the University Education Commission was appointed to suggest measures for the re-organisation of the universities to serve adequately the national needs of a developing country. For the improvement of the University system the University Grants Commission had already been set up and the University Education Commission recommended steps to place it on a stronger basis. It also
suggested a model constitution of University government and the Calcutta University Acts of 1951 and 1966 drew largely upon it. They were influenced by the Sadler Scheme also.

The problem of University autonomy has become more complicated after independence than ever before. The legislation for universities is designed to vest the Government with wider powers of control and supervision of University affairs curtailing University's academic freedom. This undemocratic posture of the Government is opposed by the Universities represented by the Inter-University Board. Of course conditions prevailing within the University are not conducive to the healthy growth of autonomy and its socio-political roots are weak too. The Government of West Bengal replaced the statutory bodies of Calcutta and other Universities of the State by governing bodies nominated by them, and propose in the Calcutta University Bill, 1979, to further restrict the academic freedom of the oldest University of India. The immediate prospect of University autonomy is dark indeed.