CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Among the innumerable problems facing India, education is one which is still in a state of confusion even after 35 years of independence and the completion of six Five Year Plans. A tremendous growth and expansion have been reported in regard to the enrolment of students in higher education, in graduation and post-graduation courses, as well as in the number of higher education institutions in the country, yet the problems such as high rate of illiteracy, low standards, and poor output appear to continue. Various schemes have been drawn up and much effort has been put in to make Indian education more useful and meaningful to a larger population, but the problems appear to be as insurmountable as before, which indicates some defect at some level.

Higher Education is not new to India. In fact a look at the historical development of higher education in the country shows that universities established in ancient India were in the form of 'Parishads' or assemblies of Brahmans who learned the Vedas and

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Dharma Shastras. From this grew up well organized centres of learning of which the most famous were Takshasila and Nalanda. In these centres of higher learning, there was a close relationship between teacher and pupil with individual instruction being diversified by public discussion. In course of time, one finds this type of centre for higher learning giving way in the medieval period, to universities, which were started with encouragement from the Moghal rulers who established colleges in cities such as Lahore and Delhi. History, Philosophy, Arabic and Persian literature were given importance in these centres.

The advent of British rule brought in the educational institutions which were meant for preservation of Law and Religion of the nation, and to train administrators to help in running the government. The effort of British to train Indians to become great scientists and literati was seen in the efforts of Lord Macart in the 1841 minutes. As a result of these efforts and that of Pt. Ram Mohan Roy the Hindu College was founded in 1817. Two decades later the Bentink's Resolution encouraged teaching of European literature and science to the natives of India in all the established institutions of learning. In the earlier part
of the 19th century the establishment of colleges received an impetus from the Government's policies, and in the latter part of the century efforts were made to establish universities for higher learning.

The Bengal Council of education proposed in 1845 the establishment of the university of Calcutta with the view to distinguish people who may be recognized as persons of liberal education. Though this proposal did not see the day light, 'Wood's despatch' of 1854 played a significant role and also was instrumental in setting up a scheme of education which was far wider and more comprehensive in its approach, than the earlier ones.

Between 1857 and 1882 the development of universities was confined to mainly the horizontal growth the increase in the number of colleges and students, but no new universities was established till 1862, apart from the three already existent universities viz., the Bombay University, the Calcutta and the Madras Universities. In order to evaluate the efficacy of these institutions of higher education, an Education Committee was instituted in 1882.

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This Education Commission collected valuable information about colleges and other related factors. As a result of its efforts two more universities were established. The recommendations of this commission were also instrumental in bringing about a rapid expansion of higher education during the subsequent two decades. In order to tackle these expansions in terms of finance and other aspects, a University Commission was appointed and following that the government passed the University Act of 1904. The Calcutta University Commission instituted in 1916, led to the rise of many more new universities. Whatever role these universities played in the pre-Independent era, it is a highly debatable issue as to whether they were able to render Higher Education relevant to Indian conditions. The entire idea and objectives of the universities in the Independent India after 1947, could be described in the words of Education Commission (1948-49), "If India is to confront the confusion of our time, she must turn for guidance, not to those who are lost in the mere exigencies of the passing hour, but to her men of letters, and men of science, to her poets and artists, to her discoverers and inventors. These intellectual pioneers of civilization are to be found and trained..."
in the universities which are the sanctuaries of the inner life of the nation. In the words of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, an ideal university was as follows:

"A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for adventure of ideas, for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human resources towards even higher objectives."

The university was thus idealized by the Indian Leaders and Educationists, and its aims and objectives were very high and laudable.

To keep in step with the above ideals the Government of India after independence took many steps to make higher education productive and capable of contributing to the national development. As a result of this thinking, in India, the maintenance and determination of standards in higher education has been made a subject in the 'Union' list and is considered a special responsibility of the Central Government. This responsibility is discharged mainly through the University Grants Commission, which has been established under an Act of Parliament. At present seven universities are functioning under the Act of Parliament. Besides,

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the Central Government has also established agencies for promotion and coordination of research efforts in specialized fields. Three such national agencies include Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, Indian Council of Historical Research and Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

The sixth plan, 1980-85, visualized an outlay of Rs 290 crores for programmes of development of universities and colleges, of which the commission had allocated Rs 64 crores, for special programmes and research; Rs 112 crores for the development of universities and Rs 14 crores for the implementation of specific schemes in the Central Universities and institutions deemed to be universities.

The enrolment in universities and colleges increased from 26.5 lakhs in 1979-80 to 27.5 lakhs in 1980-81. The University Grants Commission implemented four programmes of which the first referred to the special programme for improvement of quality in all the centres of advanced study and, the second to the support for research, and the third to the development of universities, and the fourth referred to the development of colleges. The first three, were directly
connected with higher education, and particularly referred to advanced study and research work. The University Grants Commission instituted many post doctoral fellowships, research fellowships, national associateship etc., which were all meant to encourage research of innovative and original type and to attract scholars to make the academic standards very high.

In all the previous five year plans education was taken as a social service to the community rather than as a potential input in the national development of the country. It was for the first time in the 6th plan as pointed out by Shandari (1982), education was accorded its rightful place in the national planning, and investment in education reflected the pivotal role of producing human resources for the economic and social development of the country. The working group set up by the Planning Commission in this context selected a four fold aspect of human resources namely (i) to prepare the individual for assuring his role as a responsible citizen in the country, (ii) to develop in him a specific outlook and attitude, (iii) to synthesize in him the ethical, social and cultural
values and (iv) to impart knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which would enable him to contribute to the productive programme of national development efforts.

The Education Commission (1964-66) in its report, specified the objectives of higher education as follows: (i) to seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries, and (ii) to provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to ideally gifted youth and to help them to realise their potentials fully and to cultivate physical fitness, develop the powers of the mind and cultivate in them the right interest, attitudes and moral and intellectual values. Despite the above aims and efforts, higher education failed to serve the purpose for which it was instituted, as perhaps it confronted innumerable problems.

In this context, as early as 1965, Zakir Hussain, the great educationist drew the government's attention towards the various problems facing education. He said, "Education and its problems are important anywhere, but they are doubly so in our country which is engaged in
the difficult but enchanting enterprise of building up a secular democratic state*. The need for a better standard of higher education was stressed by the Education Commission which said in its Report (1964-66) that, "If the change on a grand scale is to be achieved without violent revolution, there is one instrument and one instrument only, that could be used, EDUCATION*."

Many efforts were made to restructure the courses and to improve higher education by organising and encouraging staff development programmes in the form of seminars, symposiums and summer institutes. Yet, higher education continued to elude higher standards, meaningful output towards national development, and innovations and originality. Evaluation of higher education has been done by the U.G.C, and by special committees instituted for the purpose. Of those the Education Commission Report (1964-66) reviewing higher education said, "There is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is unsatisfactory and even alarming in some ways, that the average standard have been falling and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering the quality". Bose (1977) commenting on Higher Education said, "There is

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a wide feeling in the country that the quality of higher education is going down due to abrupt expansion of higher education". Further the uncontrolled and unplanned expansion of universities have also been criticized by many educationists. For instance, Veerasahayaven (1974), who has commented on the Education Commission Report (1964-66) had tried to pin point the flaws in the planning of higher education. He said, "If the present rate of expansion (10% a year) is assumed to be continued for the next 20 years, the total enrolments in higher education would be between 7 to 8 million, in 1985-86, or more than twice the estimated requirements for manpower for national development".

The number of universities had undoubtedly risen very high since independence; and more students are getting doctoral degrees, but the relevance of these degrees to the development of the nation is rather questionable. As stated by Bose (1977), "If we examine closely as to what happens to all the research material thus produced, one will be amazed by the largeness of the fraction which is never printed".

According to him, "The major beneficiaries..."
of university researchers seem to be researchers themselves. When they earn their doctoral degrees, they become qualified for securing a job; when jobs are obtained, the research work which helped them to secure it is practically dumped in a lumber room in the university. Research has thus lost its main purpose of adding to the store of the world's knowledge; a very large fraction of it is repetitive and not original. The above can perhaps be a reason for the failure of higher education. Kaul (1976) said, "Our universities have often in the past failed to commit themselves to causes which needed their involvement." Shrivastava (1979) said, "Qualitatively our higher education did not improve even as compared to the colonial days; on the contrary standards did suffer in certain ways." In another article, "Development of higher education in India," Professor Shrivastava (1970) had written that, "The system of higher education is now in a state of crisis, due to uncontrolled and unplanned expansion, inadequate inputs, intense of money, material and talent, falling standards of a large proportion of institutions, weakening of students motivation, increase of educated unemployment..."
weakening of discipline and dysfunctions created by adverse effect of socio-economic problems, lack of relevance and significance.

It is clear from the above statements that the institutions of higher learning by and large are not serving the purpose for which they have been instituted. Thus the question arises as to whether this state of affairs is due to the faulty planning, poor administration or wrong type of inputs, and wrong type of students. Discussing the students' role in education in the context of evaluating higher education, Rost (1977) said that, "If we are to plan higher education of the future it is extremely necessary to know the reaction of the present generation of students about the current educational system." Many others had also stressed the need to understand the attitude of students towards higher education. Discussing the problems of Indian universities, Tickoo (1980) suggested that, "A second yardstick lies in the study of attitudes - those of students and teachers and of society at large towards its temples of learning. Such attitudes also subsume the new ideals that have begun to govern the youth, the violence that marks their recent discontent". No University in India has
escaped the students' wrath and J.N.U. is no exception to this. Studies on students' unrest have also pointed to the alienation, dissatisfaction and disillusionment factors amongst students which have also been cited as important factors for the development of negative attitude amongst students towards education and consequently for the failure of education and higher education in India.

It may on the contrary be argued that students who enter the institution of higher learning with negative attitude may have held that attitude before entering it and thus their attitude might have lead to their non-contribution towards higher education. On the other hand, one may expect a better and positive contribution to the field of higher education from the students who join the courses with a positive attitude towards it.

If the above argument holds good, it would be worthwhile to ascertain the attitude towards higher education of all students who are presently enrolled in higher education, their success and failure and the typical problems faced by them which may be hindering them in making a success of the higher education course that they have taken up.

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While factors, such as teachers' attitude, quality of teaching, library and other facilities, availability of fellowships etc., might all affect higher education as a whole, the type of students who enter the arena of higher education and their attitude towards the same to a great extent impinge upon the effectiveness and contributory aspects of higher education.

Thus, if one is really interested to make the universities of higher learning more meaningful and to render it capable of contributing to the development of the nation, considerable reform and reorganisation may be required. This can perhaps be effectively done if one had an idea also about students' opinion, their aspiration and other factors regarding higher education.

Keeping the above in view an attempt has been made in this research to take up one institution of higher learning, that is, J.N.U. and study the attitudes towards higher education, of students who are involved in M.Phil and above level courses. Since these students are mainly involved in innovative and original research and since their contribution to scientific, social and
economic fields are expected to contribute to the national development, they were considered suitable sample for this study. It was hypothesised that if these students had a positive attitude towards higher education then they would also make a positive contribution and make higher education a success. Furthermore in January, there has been a feeling that not only the researches conducted by the students are original but also none of the studies make any worthwhile contribution in terms of innovative or original research. It has also been often mentioned that a large number of students who get admitted to various courses invariably fail to complete the same and thus drop out or spend their time writing up various competitive examinations. As it is well known, if a student is really involved in research and has a desire to explore, discover and contribute to innovations, then his attitude towards research as a whole will be mostly positive. On the other hand, a student who is uninvolved in research, would not only not contribute to innovation or original research, may most probably have a negative attitude towards the same.

The above thinking has been mainly responsible

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for conducting the present study. This research
has as its aim ascertaining the attitude of M.Phil/ 
Ph.D. students of J.N.U. towards higher education,
and to relate the same to various Psycho-Social factors
as well as a few of the administrative factors existent
in the university.

It is hoped that the findings of this research
would be able to throw light on the typical attitude
towards higher education held by the students involved
in the same, and also indicate some of the major causes
leading to the failure of higher education, as perceived
by the students. While various other aspects could
also be covered, such as teacher attitude, course
content and effectiveness of teaching etc., this study
by focussing on student attitudes towards higher
education could perhaps be considered as a small step
towards understanding a fraction of the problem which
haunt the field of higher education.