

## A UNIVERSITY FOR NEPAL★

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A few days back I was approached by our energetic convenor to come to speak on this occasion. I was led away by his enthusiasm and zeal on this subject of a university and was hypnotized by his charming personality; so I readily consented. I chose "Objects of a University for Nepal", quite an easy one as I had the occasion to look into the acts and statutes of a few universities and I had also the valuable contact with Dr. Byrnes. So I began to write down the objects of a University for Nepal: It reads like this:

The objects of a University for Nepal shall be:-

- (1) To preserve the cultural heritage of the nation in a progressive direction.
- (2) To teach, to learn, and to search for truth.
- (3) To promote learning and research in all branches of arts and sciences.
- (4) To advance and diffuse scientific, technical and professional knowledge.
- (5) To promote the building of character in the youth embracing the principles of piety, tolerance and Justice.
- (6) To encourage respects for the rights and personalities of the individuals in conformity with the general welfare of society and the nation.

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- (7) To inculcate the responsibilities of good citizenship in a democratic society and to instill the sense of belonging and loyalty to king and country.

That was as far I could proceed as I found that any additions would have been details of one of the above objects and neither could I delete even a single clause or phrase. Still I did have the feeling that something was wrong somewhere, the life force was lacking in just innumrating those seven objects of a University for Nepal. I had to explain away this curious feeling to myself and I feel myself privileged in having this august audience to do so.

Governments are not of monarchs, or of parliaments, or of constituted authorities alone. Acknowledge governments are supplemented by other unacknowledge ones. It is not the dictator only who can make 'conquests', it is not the reformist only who can bring about miraculous transformations of society. All such forces of conquests or reformation that have brought the world to what it is now owe their origins to seats of learning. The best way to destroy a civilization is not to destroy the military or industrial installations; it is to destroy the seats of learning. We cannot study the western civilization without coming across the universities first. The ancient Aryan civilization began to fade away after the closing down of such universities of Takshila and Nalanda. The life force of a nation depends upon its education system. A nation lives not by its military or economic resources, but by its cultural resources, its human resources.

The growth of universities in a few countries.

Universities have their origins in the needs of a nation's life and are moulded by the prevailing thoughts and ideas. The Oxford and Cambridge Universities came into being during the age of Christianity. The main function of these universities was to train men fit to serve

God in the church and state. Christianity was the force underlying all activities. With the lessening of this force came the age of liberal education in England. The idea was to produce 'Gentlemen' who could spread British supremacy and culture throughout the world. With the growth of industrial centres and the spread of secondary education over a large area, the need of the English nation could not be met by these universities. Oxford and Cambridge were both ill suited and inadequate to meet the growing new demands. The purely religious education had given way to the liberal education by that time. But the progress of science and technology produced new problems; the uplifted working mass had to be trained for the various professions. This resulted in the establishment of a chain of civic universities. The future will show the next phase of the evolution of British universities.

In America too we can find such a change in its educational system. The colonial colleges, of course, were in the line of the British colleges; that is, administering to the needs of Christianity. The private colleges also upto the time of the civil war were organized, supported and in most cases controlled by religious interests. The emphasis was on the training of ministers and the development of Christian character, through formal mental and moral discipline. There was no doubt how this was to be brought about. The logical powers of the students were to be formed by the study of mathematics; his taste, by rhetoric; and his ideals, by the Christian ethics. This system was working quite well up to the middle of the 19th century. The growth of the American community and their industrial development produced new demands on education and the educational institutions had to liberalize their curriculum. The religious character of the institutions went into background and science and technology took its place with the consequent specialized institutions and education. To offset this deplorable specialization, there is now a growing force for the spread of general education. The emphasis is now not on the

student's competence in some occupation, but on the student's whole education to fit him to be a responsible human being and a good citizen.

In ancient India learning was prized and pursued for the sake of and as a part of religion. The science of healing was practiced as a means to make the body suitable for the religious services. The intellect was sharpened and the mind put under control, because mental states always precede action of which they are determining factors. A religious man has to be conscious and discriminating about his actions. The great classic literature 'Veda' was designated as a "Sacred lore" and it has an exclusively religious stamp. The purpose of education in those days was to achieve the individual's expansion into the Absolute, his self fulfilment. The individual was the chief concern and centre of this ancient education. The relationship between the teacher and the pupil had to be very intimate and this was inaugurated by the Upanayan ceremony. The growth of the whole nature of the boy and not the growth of his intellect only was the objective of this ancient pedagogy. Above all these, the seats of learning were places of discussion where the eternal search for truth was carried on. They were located in the midst of forests far from the madding crowd and still the mass of people were in constant contact with them. The individual, the society and the nation looked upon these seats of learning for direction, for new values and ideals. The needs of those times were mainly spiritual and the universities were the religious centres.

Leaping across the centuries we find that the modern universities we find in India were established by the Britishers. Their main function was to look after the needs of the government rather than to the needs of the people of the country. Their main function was to teach the English language and the western sciences and thus to

brain up a number of English educated persons who could help in carrying on the administration of the country and propagating the British culture. The universities did fulfill these aims for some time. The university trained persons fared well in the struggle for existence though his spiritual and cultural needs had to be satisfied from elsewhere. With the upsurge of national movements, the evident lack of adjustment between the educational system and the needs of the community became more and more pronounced. Thinkers, politicians, social reformers and educationists began to search for a new system of education. Ashrams and Vidyapiths were established. The most notable among such institutions is Tagore's 'Viswabharati' at Santi Niketan. With the advent of independence, much constructive work is being carried out by the people and Government of India in evolving an indigenous system of education. By its very nature, the process is slow though the broad tendencies of developments may read out at the present moment even. To my mind the emphasis is on the training of students who shall be fit to take part in the development work of the country and who shall be able to live up to the traditional ideals and values in this modern world. The School Curriculum has been revamped; technical institutions are being established at a fast pace, and rural universities are being established. Old manuscripts are being taken out and the old traditions are being instilled back into the life of the people.

In Nepal a school was established a century ago for the sons of the ruling chiefs. If the public too got benefited by it,—well, that, was a by-product, but no special encouragement was forthcoming beyond a certain stage. Within this period a number of schools and colleges have sprung up, and they are in the lines of the British system of education in India. Before going into the question of objects of a university for Nepal it will be interesting to examine the question of the need of a university at the present moment. There

have been a persistent feeling that there should be a university established in Nepal. But, does Nepal need a university simply because every civilized country has got one at least? Or, does Nepal need the services of university to train personnel in the arts, sciences or technology? or, if Nepal needs a university, is its establishment very urgent?

Regarding the first question, the establishment of a university just to have a name in the outside world is preposterous, though such attempts have been made from time to time in various countries. A college was opened in Moscow but there no students forthcoming. The Governor of Moscow was greatly perturbed and reported the matter to Katherine the great. Katherine the great replied, "Dear Governor, if I open a college, it is not for Russia but for Europe. The day when Russian begins to take an interest in the colleges and you shall be no more." A parallel incident can be quoted from the history of Nepal also. Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere was somewhat fastidious about being called the enlightened ruler of modern Nepal. A school was already in existence at that time, so a college became a natural necessity to add to his glory. Accordingly on an auspicious day the doors of the Tri-Chandra College were opened with golden keys. There was all the usual pomp and grandeur on the inauguration of this great achievement. But at the conclusion of the ceremony Chandra Shum Sher remarked to the new Principal, "You need not congratulate me. This day I have sealed the doom of my future generations."

Regarding the second question it is curious to find that with a few hundred graduates Nepal is already experiencing the employment problem of university educated persons. By employment I do not mean being just a government officer or worker in some undertaking. I mean the full utilization of the training that a person has

undergone. Nepal is liberally flooded with scholarships and there is a growing concern that enough candidates may not be available. If such offer of scholarships continue Nepal may not have to face the shortage of university trained personnel for a generation to come.

The third question is "If Nepal needs a University, is its establishment very urgent?" The stress on the need of a University will bring forth the objects of a University for Nepal. The objects will be a natural corollary of the needs of its establishment. Nepal needs a University not because of the facts mentioned a few moments before, but because Nepal has got a nation, coordinated into one whole so that the nation can lead its own life in conformity and at peace within itself and with the outside world. Every Nepali has to be trained to be a good man and a good citizen, and it is only a university with the freedom to teach and to learn and to foster the search for truth that can look after the needs of the individuals and the nation. Out of such learnings will come out the techniques for the betterment of the poor masses. No constitutional characters or economic planning or revolutions will bring about any substantial benefits to the individual and the nation. The top priority work be the erection of a citadel of learning, a university which still stands through wars and revolutions and through the centuries.

There is no time like the present for establishing a university in Nepal. The need of the hour is to assimilate democratic principles and to place the newly earned democracy on a firmer footing. The thriving of democratic principles and the functioning of democratic ways of life require certain fundamental backgrounds. Democracy will flourish in such a society whose individuals can think effectively, can communicate thought, can make relevant judgement can discriminate among values. All these abilities in a person will make him a good citizen and a good man.

The social and political workers in this country have to face great difficulties. There is a great barrier between the workers and the people. Such workers are almost ignorant of the aspirations and hopes and needs of the people. On the other hand the people cannot decide for themselves a well formulated set of their wants nor is there any means for articulating their demands. Education alone can break down such barriers, demonstrate to the people the principles of right and wrong, and make a man conscious of his rights and duties. Education, by training to think effectively, to make relevant judgements and to discriminate values, will make person fit for the society, the country, and world; and above all he will be at peace with his own self. Hence before talking of any reform it is essential to formulate a system of national education.

There are certain conditions under which only reforms can take root in the life of a nation. Reforms must conform to national ideas and traditions, otherwise they will be superficial things only and will bring more harm than good. The course of the growth of social and national life is regulated by certain basic ideals and norms; that something which makes a nation an entity by itself. These define the structure that society and the trends of these basic ideals and norms institutions follow a blind course, there is no longer the purpose and sense of directions. The discovery and establishment of such ideals and norms is essential for the formulation of schemes of any phase of national activities. Educational reforms, too, like any other reforms must orient itself to these regulative principles which have their origins in the past but are still living forces in spite of wars, revolutions and military conquests. A nationwide hunt has to be carried out to find out where and what they are and such old basic ideals and norms have to be revaluated to make them an energetic living force. A university with the object to have the freedom to teach, and to learn and to foster the search

modelled on the needs of a country and, as the needs of the country is not static; philosophy of education cannot always remain the same. Education is an evolutionary process, changing with the needs of the time; it is shaped and reshaped in different forms.

To accomplish a desired goal, an unmistakable procedure of curriculum organization must be utilised. We must take long strides in the shortest possible time towards a well planned curriculum which can help in achieving the desired goal.

Consciously or unconsciously the teacher is increasingly aware that worth-while teaching methods should be introduced if progress is to be achieved satisfactorily. Teaching methods are as old as the history of civilization, and are rapidly changing with the environment. We should settle the question of philosophy, curriculum and method, in the light of the Educational Planning Commission Report. For the successful implementation of Commission's plan, our school system should give immediate attention to the school environment. Environment makes a deep-rooted impression in the growth and development of the child.

School environment can be classified in three main divisions—physical, educational and moral. An integrated educational approach should take into consideration the school environment, the building, the equipment of the school and in the class-room, its clean and healthy atmosphere, good boys in good company, the upward trend of social behaviour, and a division of the students on the basis of intellectual development and chronological age. The teacher consciously becomes a watch-dog of their learning and of the educational apparatus and tools. Sufficiency of instructional materials and instruments, the use of audio-visual materials, modern and scientific methods of teaching, sympathy for the student, due appreciation of their emotions, love, affection, sincerity, etc., are the essential

factors which make up the school environment. Education should be a means to a desired end, and the school environment must be composed in such a way that the student may learn something from any action or activity in it. The appraisal of the educational program should be directed towards better buildings, better libraries, better laboratories, better housing for students, better organization of student personnel programs, and improvement of the curriculum itself. The school is an ideal institution; as such it should have a democratic organization which may allow a thorough and continuous long range of opportunity, healthy development, etc. Sincerity, co-operation, co-ordination and discipline are basic principles of administration. Democracy as a way of life can be taught only in the democratic atmosphere of the school surroundings.

Next, we must look at the examination system. As a means of gradation of student, this system has impeded the smooth advancement of knowledge, and consequently it is being liquidated systematically, being replaced by better measures of the advancement of a student. This method of grading the accomplishment of a student by examination is nothing better than a sort of essay contest at the end of the annual session of school. Consequently, a comprehensive and abiding change is necessary.

The problem of the reorganization of our educational system directs our unfailing eye upon the importance of a trained teacher. Teachers are considered as "torch bearers of a nation" in a democracy as it is their intelligence and untiring endeavours that expand the horizons of the millions of our children and the majority of our adults. We should not remain complacent about the present state of affairs. We should spoil no time in recognising the arduous task of the teacher. So long as the teacher is denied the social rank and emoluments befitting his person, the dearth of the good trained teachers cannot be satisfactorily corrected.

Emphasis thus is placed upon the school system to select the means and to achieve the end. Social progress is inevitable if we concentrate our wholesale attention in launching a total reform in the light of suggestions made above. Thus only, can we accomplish the stupendous task of educational reorientation. Educators are thankful for mobilizing a new doctrine of philosophy of education for our country in view of general need and necessity and our present problems. This is the one and the most prominent device to help to maintain the highest level of achievement.

