

A UNIVERSITY FOR NEPAL.

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It has been long realized that there is a need of a National University in Nepal. Whether we consider the problem from the standpoint of practical considerations, or from one of national prestige, a university has become an absolute necessity. We need a university to satisfy the growing needs of the country for higher education, particularly as we have made up our mind to build a democratic society in Nepal with a view to bringing our country into line with the various resurgent countries in Asia. Moreover, it seems to me that our failure to date to develop a national system of education at the primary and secondary level is due, in no small measure, to the absence of a University. So the question today has come with greater urgency from the practical point of view because of the changes that have come over us in the last few years and also of the changes in the field of higher education that have come to India following her independence.

Though the need for a university has long been felt we have not been able to have a university up till now. Toward the last years of the Rana Regime some concrete thought was given to this question but unfortunately without result. After the political revolution successive Governments have raised this question, but it is a pity that the problem of the University is yet far from being solved.

As a result of keeping this question always in the forefront, however, during the last few years, certain gains, even though merely in an academic sense, have come about. It is becoming clearer every day that what we need is a national university designed and competent enough to preserve our rich cultural heritage and to set the country on the road to material progress. We do not want the domination of any alien system. Though I believe in establishing a university in Nepal, it may be desirable to bear in mind our close cultural contact with India. Even in those American Universities which are most un-European in spirit and administration, it seemed to me that the close cultural rela-

tionship, between Europe and America was always realized when the question arose regarding the preparation of the courses of study. It is but natural, therefore, that our university should not only preserve but must also ~~strengthen our close cultural contact~~ with India. Along with this, it should foster and develop a new and vital relationship with the universities of other Asian countries. Any man who is even slightly acquainted with Japan, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Tibet and China will at once realize that the culture of Nepal is a part of the great Asian cultural heritage.

Even this is not all. A university, being a seat of universal knowledge, cannot be confined to Asian culture alone. This being so, I am rather inclined to believe that even Indian educationists will not be happy if Nepal, in these late years of the 20th century established a University in slavish imitation of Indian Universities which came into being in circumstances so different from our own. To-day Indian Universities have had outstanding achievements to their credit and I yield to none in my respect for such accomplishments. The growing concern, however, among Indian educational leadership over the inadequacies of Indian Universities is an evidence of the fact that all is not well with these Universities. On last May 6, defending some of the reforms introduced into Baroda University in line with progressive educational thought in some of the more advanced countries, Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Vice-Chancellor, exhorted the educationists to move boldly ahead. Speaking against the examination system in her Presidential address to the Principals of Training Colleges of the University, she said that, "It is alarming that teachers' colleges, which provide instruction in modern techniques of evaluation and testing, suffer from *intellectual timidity* and continue to follow a system of examination imported from Britain over 100 years ago—a system which Britain herself has discarded." On the same day, at a different place, Dr. B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, speaking about the reorganised educational system of India, said, "It is absolutely necessary that some form of education should be evolved which would enable a student to function as a citizen effectively. It is not merely the question of earning. Education should be such as would create an atmosphere of culture, enable people to make judgements about men and things and turn out responsible citizens who could carry on the burden of the state. It was with this end in view that the educational system is being reorganised."

So it seems to me that this critical stage when we are establishing a university of our own, it is necessary for us to appreciate this new mood of India and to understand also what is happening

in the educational world outside India. Building on her past experience and receptive to the new advances and experiences of Europe and America, India herself has taken considerable steps to reorganise the entire educational system, in many cases with active assistance from foreign educationists. Defence of the multi-purpose schools by Dr. Roy and criticism of the examination system by Mrs. Mehta are just parts of the picture of this reorganised educational system. A man who thinks seriously about a university in Nepal must make himself familiar with the administration of Indian Universities and also with the new mood that has come over Indian Universities, especially after the Radhakrishnan Commission Report. This report was far from parochial in outlook. Dr. Radhakrishnan is intimately acquainted with the workings of European and American Universities. Recommendations among others, made by the Commission about rural Universities in India are more or less in line with Danish folk high schools and American land grants colleges. This indicated for example, that the members of the Commission were receptive to the influences from outside.

The Radhakrishnan Report has taught us that a good University cannot be conceived parochially. It has also taught us that it must conform to the genius of the people. If culture alone were the over-riding consideration, then the Universities in America would not have been different from those in Europe. We can never bring into existence a good university if we conceive of it, at the very beginning, in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, jealousy and intrigue, created by people who have no awareness at all of the effect of new ideas in the universities of the world today. This is particularly true in the more advanced universities of Europe and America. ~~None of us would welcome~~ the domination of ~~any alien system in higher education~~, but a clear distinction must be made between domination and receptiveness to advanced ideas in the field of university education. If a bogey of domination is created entirely with a view to advancing the self-interest of a couple of gentlemen with closed minds, then it seems to me that this false bogey must be explored in the larger interest of the University. If there is a genuine apprehension that the association of some people with the university in Nepal is likely to lead to a kind of domination by any foreign system, I suggest that they should withdraw from the field in the best interests of the University. But it should be our duty, too, to suggest that if the limited, and parochial views of other men are standing genuinely in the way of our realization of a university for Nepal, then it would be well if the people would ponder on this matter.