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New Universities in India.

THE multiplication of universities in a country is not necessarily a sign of the advancement of higher culture but to put it at the lowest it is proof of increased educational effort. For about a decade now, no new university has come into existence in India and the total number of eighteen has even been reduced by one, owing to separation of Burma. The recent inauguration of political reforms in the country with establishment of provincial autonomy as one of its main plans and the public discontent with the present system of education would, however, seem to be responsible for the growing aspiration visible in many parts for the creation of new universities. They will obviously be welcomed, specially, if they strike out new lines of development and avoid some dangers which will be pointed out at the end of this article.

One does not associate the North West Frontier Province with cultural activities of any kind and it generally figures before the public eye, only in connection with problems of military defence. But a university is in

prospect in the city of Peshawar in accordance with the feelings repeatedly expressed by the people of the Province and accentuated by the constitutional difficulties which have arisen in connection with the operation of the Punjab University in areas outside the jurisdiction of the Province. A Congress Ministry has just come into power and though it is doubtful if it will concern itself with this problem, before tackling the more urgent question of spreading literacy, it cannot be delayed very long. It cannot be said that the Islamia College, Peshawar, is already large enough for being transformed into a university and there is also the problem to be solved regarding the other college in the city maintained under missionary auspices, The Edwardes College, Peshawar, but the former difficulty has also an advantage in its favour, while the establishment of a Peshawar University and not an Islamia University will solve the latter. This will only be in accordance with the repeated declarations of Government and other authorities. Those who know the present conditions of the finances of the Province are of

opinion that the establishment of a university is not possible without a further increase of the subvention from the Central Government. It is not for us to say whether this would be possible at the present or even in the immediate future. But there is no doubt that the establishment of a university at the very entrance of the Khyber Pass will go a long way to civilize the tribes of the Frontier, some of whom have already come within the cultural influence of the Islamia College.

When the movement started in the United Provinces, soon after the publication of the *Calcutta University Commission's Report*, to establish unitary and residential universities, in preference to those of the affiliating type, something had to be done with the numerous colleges affiliated to the old University of Allahabad. This led to the establishment of the University of Agra which took under its wings not only the numerous colleges of the United Provinces but also those scattered all over Rajputana, Central India and Gwahar. A member of the Senate of the Agra University has already given notice that the University should have nothing to do with the colleges outside the United Provinces and a separate university for Rajputana will, therefore, soon have to be taken into consideration. This will only be the fulfilment of a long standing demand on the part of the people of Rajputana, for a separate university of their own, to develop their culture and to cater to their peculiar local needs. In fact, there were schemes adumbrated on former occasions and given up for some reason or another, but there will now be more than one compelling reason for a resumption of the idea.

Assam and Orissa have been demanding universities of their own for some time, the recent constitution of the latter into a separate province making its request more and more vociferous. A distinguished special officer, Mr J. R. Cunningham, who has had the advantage of having been its Director of Public Instruction for years, has actually prepared a scheme for the establishment of a university for Assam in accordance with a resolution of the Legislative Council and it is not improbable that action will be taken upon it at an early date in spite of the notoriously poor finances of the Province. Apart from considerations of the special cultural needs of the Province, Assam deserves to have a separate university of its own even merely because the University of Calcutta to which the colleges of Assam are

now affiliated is an unwieldy machine which has enough work to do in the huge Province of Bengal, even *minus* Dacca, which has a unitary and residential university of its own.

If there is any justification for having provinces for separate linguistic areas, there is even greater justification for giving them separate universities. Distributed over four provinces, Bengal, Bihar, Central Provinces and Madras the Oriyas had been deprived, for a long time, not only of the advantages of homogeneous lives, but also of developing their common languages and culture, but now that this has been rectified and there is a separate province of Orissa, a new university is inevitable. A Committee has already examined the question and however difficult it may be to get the Government of India to increase its subvention to the Province, the Minister and the public will soon have to find money for transforming the Ravenshaw College of Cuttack into a university for Orissa. The Oriya language has not been able to keep pace with the literacy renaissance that has been evident all over India, but it is hoped the establishment of a university will give adequate opportunities to the people of the Province for this laudable purpose.

Among the problems with which the newly formed Province of Sind is faced is that of a university of its own. An important Committee has already considered the question and recommended the appointment of a special officer to work up the details of the question and there is no doubt the Government is trying to find out ways and means to meet this development. It is not merely that the Sindhis have a language of their own still awaiting development. Geographical conditions make it rather difficult for the Province to participate, in any intimate manner, in the activities of the University of Bombay which is situated at a considerable distance. The people of Sind have also had a grievance, with what justification it is not for us to judge, that in the loaves and fishes of university patronage, the Deccani and the Gujarati have had a disproportionate share leaving the Sindhi in cold. It may not also be improbable that the establishment of a university in Sind—as it is likely to be at Karachi—will enable special attention being paid to some new subjects in India like Marine Biology and Naval Engineering.

The University of Bombay has suffered in the past, as anybody with a knowledge of its working knows, by the rivalries of the

Mahratti and Gujarati communities which are both concerned with the working of the institution. It is eminently desirable that this jealousy and bad feeling should be put an end to, as early as possible by the establishment of two separate universities at Poona and at Ahmedabad for the two linguistic areas. Poona is one of the most populous educational centres in India with three colleges of immense size, due more or less entirely to indigenous enterprise and is an admirable centre for a unitary university. Its salubrious climate and the keen intellectual powers of the Deccani Brahmin whose stronghold it has been for centuries are other attractions. We hope that when the university is established, the glories of the Poona of the Peshwas will be revived once more, and the countrymen of Tilak and Gokhale will add new lustre to their distinguished record of scholarship and service and thirst for educational expansion.

Ahmedabad cannot be said to be as ripe as Poona for a separate university of its own, but it is becoming an increasingly important educational centre, as may be seen from the fact that two new degree colleges have been opened within the last two or three years, due again to the philanthropy of its merchant princes. Gujarati, with Bengali, may be said to be among the most active Indian languages of to-day, flowering forth into a new and vigorous life, and the people have deserved a university of their own. Within the next few years Sabarmati will have a new association added to its name, with a university rearing its stately towers on its banks, with the generosity of the enlightened millionaires of Ahmedabad. Before we conclude this section, we have only to add that the Senate of the Bombay University as well as the Bombay Legislative Assembly, have recently blessed this scheme of starting new universities for the separate linguistic areas.

After the establishment of universities in the two premier states of India, Hyderabad and Mysore, Baroda must have followed suit in the natural order of things, especially as schemes for a separate university for the State have been in existence for several years and detailed proposals are available, but Travancore has stolen a march over her and the next academic year will see a new uni-

versity amidst the palm girt lagoons of Malabar, at Trivandrum, the Capital of the State, almost at the very romantic edge of the whole country, Cape Camorin. Judged by advancement in the percentage of literacy and the number of colleges in the State, the establishment of a separate university can not be delayed any longer. In fact, it is surprising, the university should not have materialized long ago. It should also be matter for gratification that it is not proposed to make the university a replica of the existing universities in India, but it will strike out new lines of its own.*

We need not shirk the fact that there is some discontent in the Kerala country that the scheme is not for a pan Kerala university which may be a matter of special interest and pride to the entire Malabar country. But it may be pointed out it is not an easy task to establish a common university for an area administered by three different political authorities, the British Government, Travancore and Cochin. There is no reason why the special culture of Kerala should not be considered safe in the hands of a Travancore University. Again the establishment of a university by Travancore does not necessarily negative the prospect of a pan Kerala university when it may be found possible.

It is perhaps, not much use prophesying in matters of this kind, but it may be said that within the next five or ten years there will be more than half a dozen universities established at various centres in India in British territory as well as in the states. But the establishment of new universities will not be of much use unless some warnings are kept in mind. They should not be mere imitations of the existing universities in India, but should cater to new needs which have been pressing themselves on the public attention. Their organization should be such as to prevent members of the staff from wasting much of their time on the routine details of university administration. It must also be recognized from the very beginning that the function of a university is not to examine students but also to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge.

P SESHADRI

* Since the article was in type H. H. The Maharaja of Travancore has issued a Proclamation inaugurating the University of Travancore.