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SIR ASUTOSH MUKHOPADHYAY AND HIS VIEWS ON NATIONALISM DURING THE PERIOD OF HIS VICE CHANCELLORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The period may be termed as the rebirth of Calcutta University's rebirth when Sir Asutosh assumed the office as Vice-Chancellor. He realized at the very beginning that University Education should be utilized for the upliftment of the Nation. The partition of Bengal raised a storm not only in Bengal but throughout the length and breadth of India. Sir Asutosh was the child of the times. He worked hard to bring an awaited change in Indian Renaissance, an intellectual regeneration through a nationwide progress of Education. Through the development of the University he made the mission of his life to remove the stigma of India's cultural inferiority attached to her by her imperial masters, to explode the fiction of her intellectual defeat and raise her once more to the lofty pedestal of glory. He loved his motherland and in spite of holding a respectable position in the Government service; he never bothered to criticize the Government whenever and wherever he found any wrong policy formulated by them. He never supported the Nationalistic platform but always served his country through his true actions.

KEYWORDS: Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay, Views on Nationalism, Nationalistic platform.

INTRODUCTION:

A new epoch opened in the history of the University with the Indian University Act, 1904. The Act was the result of the deliberations of Curzon's Educational Conference at Shimla in 1901, and the recommendations of the University commission which Curzon appointed in 1902. By the end of the nineteenth century when extremist ideas were already catching the imagination of young Indian patriots, the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon precipitated the extremist challenge. The political thought and movement had already reached such a stage in Bengal which could no longer be tolerated by an imperialist like Lord Curzon. By dividing the Bengali speaking population he expected to weaken their influence on national movement. The partition of Bengal was a challenge to the Bengal nationalists. The announcement of partition in July 1905 set off a mighty

upsurge which brought in people and political leaders of all shades of opinion.

During this political upsurge Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay was appointed Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University for a period of two years on March 31st 1906. He was reappointed for three more successive terms and thus continued as Vice Chancellor up to March 31st 1914. During his Vice Chancellorship the University of Calcutta was derided as a Golam Khana - A manufacturer of slaves and sycophants. The fears and anxiety of the people of this country that the British Government of the day was utilizing the University for purposes other than academic and for the suppression of ideas about freedom was gradually gaining ground.

The proposal to appoint Asutosh Mukhopadhyay as Vice-Chancellor was initiated by H.H. Risley, the Home Secretary. Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay was

appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta on the 31st March 1906 for two years. He was therefore Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta continuously from the 31st March 1906-30th March 1914. Asutosh Mukhopadhyay accepted the Vice-Chancellorship in the pursuit of an ideal. No doubt he loved power but the ideal occupied the higher place.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To highlight the period of the development of Nationalism in India and Bengal.
- To analyze the period during which Calcutta University came into existence.
- To analyze Sir Asutosh's viewpoint on Nationalism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Subramanyam, R.S., 1958, Madras University Ph.D. Education - The Educational Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore - a comparative study with relevance to Modern India. Here an attempt has been made to study the educational writings of the two thinkers as well as the critique on their works by other authors with a view to comparing their relative importance in the need of modern India. Education as he conceived it was no less than a struggle for freedom - freedom from ignorance oppression and injustice. He would conceive education only as a dynamic force leading to definite destination. Tagore on the other hand conceived of education as that which not merely gave information but brought one's life in harmony with all existence. The object of education was to give man, the unity of truth.

Verma, K.K. 1968 Patna University Ph.D. Education - Development of Educational Philosophy in Modern India from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi. This study sought to establish the basic assumption that the educational philosophy in Modern India with all its idealistic trends exhibited a great cultural continuity. From Roy to Gandhi Indian Educational philosophy represented a synthetic spirit to build a comprehensive system of education reconciling the east and the west with strong sociological base rich in metaphysics and spanning universal significance.

Dikshit, S.S., 1969 Patna University Ph.D. Education - Contributions of National Movements to the Development of Indian Education from 19th Century to 1947. The study aimed at reviewing the Indian national education and its various sub-systems.

Shukla, S.C. 1958, Delhi University Ph.D. Education - Educational development in British India (1854-1904). The study aimed at tracing the growth of education and educational structure during the British period. Elementary Education in the mother tongue came with the purview of Government policy in the 1840's. This period also saw the development of public works policy leading to the provision of training engineering personnel. The dispatch of 1884 gave all these measures a unified shape and laid down the lines of future development. Among the major recommendations were the establishment of universities and setting up departments of public instructions. In higher education in Indian Universities (up to 1882) the syllabi prepared on the model of London University emphasized literature, classics, philosophy and mathematics. Higher education during 1882 and 1904 was characterized by an intense controversy over university structure, control and functions and efforts to introduce sciences and technical studies into the universities. This period was marked by a growth in the national consciousness and criticism of Britain rule.

Raj, A.S. 1968, Kerala University, Ph.D. Education - Educational Policy of the Government of India during the British period. The present investigation sought to study the policy decisions of the Government of India during the British period on various aspects of Indian Education at different times. The term 'Government of India' relates to the Supreme Government of Fort William till such time the administration of India passed to the hands of the British crown. The study has discussed the evolution of the educational policy, the educational controversies and the growth of education in the period.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher is keenly interested in the history of the development of the University of Calcutta during the developmental period of nationalism with special reference to Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay, the legendary

figure whose untiring effort and fiery zeal has given the Calcutta University its present platform and status hence the researcher felt the need to take up this research study.

A study on Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay and Calcutta University during development of nationalism in Bengal is very much relevant with the scope of historical research.

Historical research is the application of the scientific method of inquiry to the historical problems. It demands standard of careful methodology and spirit comparable to those which characterize other types of research. Although hypotheses are not always explicitly stated in historical investigation they are usually implied.

The historians gather evidence and carefully evaluate its trustworthiness. If the evidence is compatible with the consequences of the hypothesis it is confirmed. If the evidence is not compatible or negative, the hypothesis is not confirmed. It is through such synthesis that historical generalization is established.

Sir Asutosh was a dynamic personality who served the Calcutta University as a Vice Chancellor during the British rule and re-structured the University in a unique way.

The researcher tried to bring forward Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay's unique way to reform the Calcutta University during the crucial period of development of Nationalism, although he never joined hands with the movements. He was a patriot but he hated the platform of nationalism. He was a man of work but not words and proved that in every sphere. The researcher has undergone through analysis of both the primary sources and secondary sources of the data while doing the work.

DISCUSSION

Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay is regarded as a great educationist and Jurist of his time. The sixty years of his life saw Indian renaissance growing into powerful and all embracing national awakening particularly in the first quarter of the 20th Century, when for thirty five years (1889-1924) he was the living spirit in the field of Higher Education at the University of Calcutta and for Twenty years (1903-24) he was a judge of Calcutta High Court and for short period of time (1899-1903) he was a member of imperial Legislative Council.

Deep patriotism and national feelings inspired Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay in his manifold activities. He stood aloof from the low phases of nationalist struggle (1905 and 1921). When the agitation for the boycott of western education and school and colleges swept the country; for "Light" he held the notion that east and west should reach us from the western gates and western system of education was to be availed for the purpose.

He took the advantage of the very nationalist movement (1905 onwards) to strengthen his arms and give a national character and purpose to the University of Calcutta which he guided in that direction. The crowning act in this respect was his resignation from the Vice Chancellorship in 1923 with the historic declaration of defiance against Lord Lytton's attempt at curbing the autonomy of the University; "Freedom first, freedom second, freedom always nothing else would satisfy me".

In the opinion of Sir Asutosh, democracy is indispensable for education. The educators must have the right to think and decide freely. He also opined that there should be complete administrative freedom. The Government should not interfere in the administrative work of the University. The ideal teacher should be non-political. Sir Asutosh was in favor of mother tongue as the medium of instruction.

To his mind University is a corporation of teachers and students banded together for the pursuit of learning and the increase of knowledge, housed and fitly endowed to meet the demands raised in achievements of its purposes.

He pleaded for freedom in the University, freedom in its inception, freedom in the administration; freedom in its expansion.

To him University was a great store house of learning, a great bureau of standard, a great workshop of knowledge, a great laboratory for training as well as of men of thought as of men of action.

Although he was educated in English literature, still he never ignored indigenous literature. He was proud to be an Indian. During his second convocation address in 1908, Swadeshi movement was growing intensely. The system of education was not in a good condition. He could not keep himself aloof and quiet. He asked the students to keep themselves aloof from the politics and political leaders.

He asked the students to train themselves in political economy, political philosophy, and constitutional law. He also asked them to remember that if they join the political party, then they would deprive themselves of that academic freedom which is pre-requisite to self-education and culture. He did not support those teachers who were involved in politics. In his opinion the ideal teacher should be free from politics. He also warned the teachers who used to involve themselves in politics.

Although Sir Asutosh urged upon the youth not to get involved in active politics, during student hood, it raises a doubt in our mind whether he said this out of his experience or not, because while he was studying B.A he himself got involved in active politics in his "A Nation in Man Making". Rashtraguru Surendranath Banerjee said, "In the demonstration that followed the passing of sentence, the students took a leading part, common among the young men all over the world, smashing the windows and pelting the police with stones one of those rowdy youths was Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay subsequently, so well-known as a judge of the high court and as vice-chancellor of Calcutta University" May be Sir Asutosh was later influenced by Swami Vivekananda who graduated in the same year with Sir Asutosh.

"I have nothing to do with the nonsense politics..... Education Is the Panacea of all evils" Educate! Educate! Educate! That is what he wanted. Probably Sir Asutosh was inspired by Swamiji's ideology. So he discarded the politics and embraced the path of education. Sir Asutosh knew that the path is not easy. It was impossible to do anything without the help of the Government. Lord Curzon's intention to officialise the University and restrict the expansion of education created disbelief in the mind of Indians. In the mean time Sir Asutosh became the Vice-Chancellor. Guru Surendranath Banerjee said, "His long familiarity with the Calcutta University, his wide acquaintance with the educational problems and his extra ordinary capacity for dealing with them made Sir Asutosh the most commanding figure in the University. During the time he was Vice-Chancellor he ruled the University with a supreme sway; and it is but right to say that he enforced the regulations with a measure of discretion, a regard for all interest, that partly allayed the suspicion and anxiety they had created in the mind of the educated community of Bengal."

He was a great educationist, undoubtedly he was. His heart was with the nation He was a builder. He tried to build this great Indian Nation and honor it by his activities. The motto of Sir Asutosh's Educational policy was man-making and nation making.

For years, every hour, every minute, he could spare from other unavoidable duties-foremost among them the duties of judicial office-has been devoted by him to University work. Plans and schemes to heighten the efficiency of the University had been the subject to his daydreams; they had haunted him in the hours of nightly rest. To University concerns he had sacrificed all chances of study and, research pressibly to some extent, the interest of family and friends and certainly, a good part of health and vitality. A question may arise, what was the source of inspiration behind this unimaginable sacrifice which motivated Sir Asutosh to move in such a way. Sir Asutosh had a clear view regarding the Swaraj in education, democracy in education, Government's intervention, and freedom in the University. He never got himself involved in political resolution or any anti-British movement, but he plunged into a controversy with the British Government regarding the freedom in the University affairs. In practical reality in spite of not being a politician, he had a deep love for motherland, for the nation, for freedom.

He vehemently protested against the idea of transforming the University into a Department of the state. He said, "I deny most emphatically that it is necessary or desirable to have any provision in the law, which may possibly convert the University into mere Departments of State....."

He was a freedom conscious man. He knew at the very core of his heart that without academic freedom any educational institution cannot fulfill its responsibilities perfectly. The British rulers had never thought in their dreams that He can shatter the educational policy made by them and at the same time could build up a structure of education which was beneficial for his fellow countrymen.

He demanded for the right of freedom of the University. He raised his voice for the freedom from trammels in other directions-political fetters from the state, civic fetters from the community and pedantic fetters from what may be called the corporate repressive action of the University itself.

Taking the advantage of the financial crisis of the university the education minister of the British

Government Sir Prabhash Chandra Mitra proposed to provide financial help on the basis of some conditions which was in other words a matter of humiliation for the University.

Sir Asutosh said, "This University will not be a manufactory of slaves We want to teach freedom....We shall not be a part of the Secretariat of the Government.... Will not the future generations cry in shame, that the Senate of the University of Calcutta bartered away their freedom for two and half lakh of rupees? "

He again said, "If you give me slavery in one hand and money in the other I despise the offer..... Our post graduate teachers would starve themselves, rather than give up their freedom..... I call upon sons of your Alma mater. Freedom first, freedom second, freedom always, nothing else will satisfy me "

In 1922 March in his convocation address he quoted from Tagore's Prarthana. He imagined reconstructing the Nation, his country according to the thought of Rabindranath Tagore. He called upon the youth of the country to join with him in a fervent prayer for the well being of the motherland in the words of the message of our great National Poet, Rabindranath Tagore,

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high....."

Although he was deprived of serving his motherland while he became the Chief Justice, he considered University as his Motherland and by serving the University he got satisfaction. He called upon the people of Bengal:

"People of Bengal you have at your doors the foundation already laid of a great University, a University devoted to the advancement of literature, Science and Art..... It is for you, people of Bengal, to determine whether you will make this University a national asset. We invite every citizen conscious of his duty and responsibility, unmoved by ignorant and prejudiced criticism, to come forward to be united with us in feeling, in purpose, for the realization of our vision of duty and of service. The University would be dead to the Nation, if it were made to stand on a height of its own, isolated from the community. On the other hand, if the activities of the University were more and more assimilated with the life of the nation, it might then be even more dominant as a leader than it has ever been before."

In the words of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, "His heart was with the Nation". He was never with the British People. He was genuinely a Nationalist. That is why he proudly said against the National leaders.

"It is your National leaders the Swadeshiwalas of today who dare not appear in public in the streets of Shimla or Darjeeling or even in Calcutta with their dhoti and slippers on for fear lest they should be observed by their foreign acquaintances, but I the son of a Brahmin have not in my life, felt ashamed to expose my sacred thread to the gaze of the foreigners. Cowards at heart as these leaders are, how can they command respect? From foreigners or emancipate the mind of Young Bengal or inculcate in young minds the spirit of independence and equality with the ruling race?"

Sir Asutosh never considered politics as the standard measure of patriotism. That is why he boldly said to the students,

"You want a Swadeshi University? Is not Calcutta University Your University? The Senate and Syndicate are in the hands of Bengalese. It is fostered by the donations of the sons of the sons of Bengal. Everyone is in national dress. There is no foreign influence here .Should you insult this noble patriotism, this generous self sacrifice".

He also said - "My religion is my country". To acquire knowledge, to work hard, and to devote himself for the wellbeing of his motherland these three were the aim of his life.

CONCLUSION

In the words of Radhakrishnan it may be said that "Those who light but a little candle in the darkness help to make the whole sky aflame. In the year to come it will be recognized to his lasting credit, that he furthered the true progress of his people by diverting some of the best amongst them from the chief industries of the land, low and government service, to scholastic careers. Many of those who have enhanced the reputation of the University in the world of letters- to mention names would be invidious- took to literary and scientific pursuits, thanks to the passionate pleadings of Sir Asutosh".

Sir Asutosh believed that nationalism might be achieved through education. In fact our debt to Sir Asutosh particularly in respect of expansion of higher education is beyond measure. The outcome is the Calcutta University which stands pre-eminent among other Universities and has acquired 500th position in the world and has celebrated 150th year in 2007.

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