

CURRENT SCIENCE

Vol. X]

JULY 1941

[No. 7

	PAGE		PAGE
<i>University of Orissa</i>	315	<i>Ramanujan—His Life and Work.</i> M. R.	
<i>Silver Jubilee Convocation</i>	318	SIDDIQI	343
<i>Research Workers and the Patent System.</i>		<i>Metrology of Punch-marked Coins.</i> K. A. N.	345
BY DR. P. K. KAPRE	319	<i>An Aid to Study of Kant.</i> R. NAGA RAJA	
<i>On the Malabar Cyclone of May 1941.</i> BY		SARMA	346
C. RAMASWAMY	322	<i>Centenaries—</i>	
<i>Rai Bahadur Prof. K. C. Mehta, Sc.D.</i> ..	324	<i>Baskerville, Simon (1574–1641)</i> ..	347
<i>Letters to the Editor</i>	325	<i>Science Notes and News</i>	348
<i>Reviews</i>	336	<i>Academies and Societies</i>	352

UNIVERSITY FOR ORISSA

IN determining the type of university most suitable for Orissa, the University Committee appointed by the Congress Ministry in 1938 has reached the decision that a wholly centralised variety would not accord with the actual requirements of the Province, and would not be justified either by the distribution of the collegiate institutions in the State or by the stage of educational development now attained. Presumably after carefully investigating the wealth of experience accumulated in many places and in many directions, the Committee have favoured the establishment of an affiliating university at Cuttack, and it must be remembered that there is already a similar university functioning at Patna.

Since the older Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay still retain the garb though not the clothes of a mere examining body, it may be reasonable to suppose that the judgment of the Orissa Committee is wise, especially in view of the circumstances prevailing in the Province. The jurisdiction over which the new university will exercise its control is fairly limited,—an advantage which will promote its efficiency. Further it may not be absolutely a correct policy to break with the past.

It is true that under the stimulus of the Universities Act of 1904 and under the influence of public opinion people have come to regard that a university should share in the actual work of teaching, instead of

remaining an impassive body controlling higher education through public examinations. Not until the impact of popular demand became irresistible, did the universities established in 1857 readjust their constitutional machinery. The various reports of University Commissions have emphasised and approved the popular feeling that the universities must be invested with the responsibility of co-ordinating their functions with the social, physical and intellectual needs of their students, and with the economic and industrial activities of the State. The recent university projects inaugurated in the last few years accentuate and reflect this higher conception of the functions of a university.

We have not the full report before us. It would be premature to discuss the merits of the Orissa Committee's recommendations from the meagre extracts that have been published. Judging by their look, the proposed university will acquire the structural and functional pattern enjoyed by Madras till 1908, without, however, its congestion and extensive academic jurisdiction. These features may at first sight seem uninviting, but there can be little doubt that the recommendations of the Committee might contemplate an ultimate design by which it will gradually be possessed of possibilities transcending the scope of the original intentions. Even among the teaching universities there is not uniformity of pattern, for there are those which are strictly unitary in type in which all teaching of a formal nature is conducted by the university organization, and there is the second variety which fulfils its functions through the constituent colleges associated with it. India is sufficiently diverse to provide ample room for

universities of all complexions, and her requirements can be met by the unitary universities as well as by the affiliating universities.

Among the various causes which have militated against the fruitful development of the unitary universities or against any other type in maintaining a high standard of moral and intellectual endeavour within their jurisdiction, or in acting as clearing houses of knowledge promoting the material prosperity of the country, the greatest are lack of endowments and adequate subvention on the one hand and superfluity of student population on the other. The boundary line separating the different categories of universities must be, after all, in the long run, a matter of constitutional expediency, and need not necessarily be the means of such profound significance as to alter the fate and fortune of a whole country. What India wants is a network of inspiring seminaries of knowledge, within whose halls there are men who are little universities in themselves, and whose creative genius will fertilise the minds of young men, who in their turn will blossom into dynamic intellectual apostles. Sir Venkataraman placed in Sahara, Bow Bazaar or in the Indian Institute of Science is a smiling university in himself. It is obvious that, since mankind has not yet invented a process of making bricks without straw, the Indian universities suffering from chronic financial anæmia cannot be accused of lagging behind their foreign congeners, which can very well stand a considerable amount of transfusion. Nevertheless it must be gratefully acknowledged that the Indian universities struggling under severe handicap have produced work which is at

once impressive and significant. Orissa need not be troubled over the type. If it has ample financial support and potential men such as Sir Venkataraman, Professor Saha, Dr. Ghosh, Professor Sahni, Professor Krishnan and Sir Radhakrishnan, the proposed affiliating university will achieve distinction.

Even more serious than financial inadequacy is the unmanageable size of student population,—a condition hostile to the successful evolution of a corporate intellectual communion in the universities, comparable to the best traditions of the older British universities. All attempts in the direction of imposing restraints on the free admission of students must be deprecated. The greatest reproach of our universities is that they act as a sort of one-way traffic system, leading the students ultimately into blind alleys, instead of being centres of divergent radiation, along which young men could march in a spirit of hope and courage to places where they might fulfil their destiny. All the existing universities have a handsome but unexpressive face; viewed from any standpoint, their duplication is indefensible. We could put the available resources to a better purpose and might even hope of attracting more funds, if we plan a brotherhood of regional universities, having affiliations to each other, intimately related to the larger human problems, specialising in some departments of knowledge with provision for schools of research, instead of ambitious crowded schemes leading to duplication and wasteful effort. There is rather a great need for realigning our universities not on a constitutional but a federal basis, each

constituent university having autonomous control, directing its specialised department or departments,—humanities; pure and applied branches of science; social, political and economic science; professional colleges; technology; administration; transport, communication, commerce and statistics; finance and related institutions. Besides securing relief from congestion, the federal scheme will provide sufficient room for students belonging to communities with different occupations, aptitudes and outlook, and the present tendency to regard the passage of all university students through the same curricula of studies, which has become a normal practice, should give place to diversified courses concentrated in different specialised centres. It is not equitable that young men should be denied all facilities for education of the university standard, merely because they have no aptitude for the cast iron uniformity of studies.

The reconstruction of our universities for direct use to the society is a duty as instant as that of improving natural knowledge for discovery. They are not to be regarded merely as a channel of escape to a world of discontented young men, and should not seek vindication on remote and abstract criteria. A university is at bottom a social function, with inescapable social responsibilities and obligations, and if our universities are to live as a vital force, they must ever keep human values and problems in the forefront, and they must justify their existence by their contributions to the enrichment of the spiritual and material wealth of the nation.