

## Chapter IV

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## Chapter IV

### EVOLUTION OF AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES IN INDIA

(Secondary data analysis)

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION.

As has been narrated in the previous chapter on methodology, the first objective of this study is to make a historical survey of the evolution of the concept of autonomy to colleges in the higher education system. This chapter aims to explore this objective.

For this historical survey various documents such as, writings of eminent authorities, Reports of Commissions and Committees appointed by different governments and agencies in the educational administration of the country, Policy guidelines and decisions of the governments, universities, individual colleges, etc., University Grants Commission Guidelines and directives, etc. are made use of. In addition to the content analysis of these documents, relevant information gathered from unstructured interviews with the faculty, students, managements and other functionaries of the colleges and universities are also incorporated in the discussion.

"In modern social science research historical research is looked upon with contempt, forgetting the fact that history contributes much in the story of human civilization (SURTI,1964). This is true also with regard to the history of education. Often people

refuse to look back to the prolonged processes involved before the introduction of an innovation. This kind of neglect of history and lack of a critical evaluation of such historical processes are the reasons why academicians and educational planners are prone to repeat the mistakes of the past, and thereby impede the happening of the legitimate progress and innovations in the field. In order to avoid such pitfalls and to learn from the past, this part of the study surveys the developments in the field of higher education which culminated in the establishment of autonomous colleges in India. Period-wise this survey is broadly divided into the following sections:

4.2 Ancient Period upto 1857

4.3 British Period 1857 to 1947

4.4. Period after Independence upto 1978

Under these major periods, the survey is further divided into different sections as given at the beginning in which the relevant details, features and important developments are discussed.

#### 4.2. AUTONOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA DURING THE ANCIENT PERIOD UPTO 1857.

India has a very ancient tradition of higher education with highly sophisticated administrative and organisational structures. There were world famous centres of learning in India, like Takshasila, Nalanda, Vallabhi, Kanchi, Vikramasila and Odanthapuri, Nadia, etc. The prototypes of these centres of

learning were the 'Parishads' or assemblies of Brahmans learned in Vedas and Dharmasastras. The curriculum in these centres of learning included the Vedas and Vedangas, the eighteen arts which comprised medicine and surgery, astronomy and astrology, agriculture and accountancy, archery and snake-charming, etc. The students at Nalanda spent as many as twelve years studying various disciplines. This institution flourished for some 800 years from the beginning of the fifth century B.C. There were times when Nalanda had 10,000 students and 1,500 teachers delivering 100 lectures daily, with as many as eight departments or colleges and the subjects taught included metaphysics, philosophy, logic, astronomy, grammar, medicine, etc. Students came from far away places like Jawa, China, etc. There were three libraries and an astronomical observatory. There were large complexes of hostels and lecture halls. (University Education Commission, 1949).

A mention is made here about the higher education institutions of ancient India just to state that these enjoyed autonomy (Desai, 1970) in their administration both institutional and academic. Funding by the public and by the governments for education was the practice even in ancient India. Thus, "The schools, colleges and the universities- (to use present day terminology) - were supported by gifts or 'Dakshina' of the philanthropists. They provided even free food and clothing to the students... Thus university of Nalanda was established and maintained by the endowment created by 500 traders and liberal donations by the Emperor of Magdh and the neighbouring emperors"

(Gupta, 1983). But these generous donations and endowments did not entitle them nor did they make any claim, for exercising control over these institutions where the ultimate power rested with the teachers and the management. In fact the teachers had the highest degree of autonomy, similar to that enjoyed by the teachers of ancient universities of Europe (International Encyclopedia of Higher Education, 1877) which were, of course, of later origin when compared to Nalanda

#### 4.3. CONSTRAINTS ON THE AUTONOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD FROM 1857 TO 1947.

Planned intervention in the higher educational field in India by the colonial rulers resulted in constraints on the autonomy of colleges existing at the time of establishing of universities and those established later on .University education in India in the modern sense of the term is of British origin during the colonial rule and its organisation dates back to 1857 when the three universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established. But the history of higher education in modern india starts with collegiate education and it had the characteristics of what we call autonomous colleges in those days.

There were a number of colleges existing in different parts of the country started at different periods of time. Thus there was the Calcutta Madarassa (1781), Banaras College (1792),

Bareilly college (1827) Hoogly college (1831), Madras Christian College (1837), Presidency College, Madras (1841) St. Joseph's College, Trichy (1844), Poona College (1851), and Elphinstone College (1855). In 1857 there were 26 colleges in India including two medical and an engineering college.

They were autonomous institutions following their own courses of study and curriculum and evaluation procedures and awarding their own degrees and diplomas. Even after the establishment of the universities these colleges were not automatically affiliated to them. They joined the universities at different time periods.

The universities were first established as examining bodies and they conducted common examinations for the colleges. Later on uniform courses were introduced leading to the concept of 'standards' in higher education. (John 1971) Along with this came uniformity and conformity to the norms and the high degree of sanctity attached to public examinations at a massive scale, on the basis of a rigidly defined course of study imparted in the colleges (Narayan, 1974) This type of public examination was the result of the recommendations of the University Education Commission (1904) and reduced the colleges to a position of total dependence and subservience to the universities (University Education Commission 1949).

Thus starting of the three universities in 1857, affiliation of colleges to them, requirements to conform to common standards in higher education conditioned by common examinations conducted by

the universities based on a prescribed curriculum and syllabi, all together curtailed the freedom of colleges to perform these functions and made them non-autonomous in character.

**Attempts to Regain Autonomy to Colleges During the British Period, 1916 and after upto 1947.**

Till the beginning of this century there were no faculty members attached to the universities and there were no teaching departments with the universities, and also no residential facilities for teachers and students. These functions and facilities were of the colleges (John 1970) (Gupta 1983). When Sir Asutosh Mukerjee was the Vice Chancellor, the starting of teaching departments and of post graduate teaching by the Calcutta university in 1916, was seen by the affiliated colleges as an infringement upon their territory. Consequently, the principal of presidency college, Calcutta, campaigned for the freedom of his college to prescribe its own curricula and to conduct its own examinations. This was the first attempt in the history of Indian higher education by any college to become autonomous. This principal did not succeed in getting his wish fulfilled and the issue remained dormant for a very long time to come. (John, 1985).

#### **4.4. DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD TOWARDS AUTONOMY FOR COLLEGES, 1947 - 1978.**

Political independence necessitated a change in the directions and objectives of higher education in India. The base of

education had to be expanded in order to cater to the demands for higher education by the increasing young population of the country. There was the need for a new philosophy of education, new orientations had to be devised. All these prerogatives led to the appointment of the University Education Commission, 1949, headed by Dr.S.Radhakrishnan. This Commission Report discusses at length about autonomy to educational institutions. Before the Commission Report and subsequent such reports are discussed, it is necessary to examine the first legislation in Indian Higher Education history about autonomous colleges, the circumstances that led to the search for autonomy to colleges, into the arguments in favour and against such moves, the main objectives of such an innovation sought after, etc. These points are discussed in the subsequent sections.

#### 4.5. FIRST LEGISLATION TOWARDS AUTONOMY FOR COLLEGES IN INDIA.

The idea of autonomous colleges remained active in the mind of academics in India and it was again brought to surface in 1953 by Dr.R.K Singh, the principal of B.R.College, Agra and subsequently the Vice-Chancellor of Merut and Himachal Pradesh universities. Dr. Singh succeeded in getting a resolution passed in the Senate of Agra university in 1954 in support of conferring autonomy to colleges under the university. This was a highly controversial issue and considerable amount of discussion has preceded this piece of legislation in the university.

The eminent educationalist Dr. V.V.John, who was the Principal

of Government College, Ajmer, at that time wrote in the College Times, Sept.1, 1953, about this proposal for autonomous colleges: "of all the provisions of the bill this cautiously worded section is the most revolutionary. And in our view none of the other changes proposed in the organisation of the university will be so effective as this permissive clause in salvaging the declining standards of our university. And yet no other proposal in the Amendment Bill is likely to arouse the same vehemence of criticism as this one has already done. The proposal is novel in the field of Indian education but we shall not be launching on completely uncharted seas. The United States and England can give us reassuring precedents of autonomous colleges. The difference would be that the proposed autonomy for our colleges will not be quite so complete" (Gupta, 1983).

Those that were afraid of the proposal feared that this would lead to the splitting of Agra university into smaller universities which will neither be independent universities nor dependent colleges with the present safeguards and university guidance. It seems many were afraid of the proposed freedom and the consequent responsibility.

Another apprehension was that the new arrangement would lead to disparity of standards. This argument was countered with the expressed expectation that any change from the then existing low level could be a change for the better.

Inspite of the vehemence of opposition to this legislation by the 'academic mafia' (John 1970), of the Agra University Senate, after a five hour debate, this resolution was passed by the Senate and recommendations were made to the state government to legislate statutory provisions in the Agra University Act to incorporate this innovation. The state legislature did pass such an amendment law to the Agra University Act. But unfortunately the opponents of this novel idea had the upper hand and neither Agra University nor U.P state could achieve the distinction of being the first in starting an autonomous college in the country. In fact this university or even the state does not have a single autonomous college even today, 37 years after passing this legislation while many other universities and states are going ahead with a number of autonomous colleges.

#### 4.6. THE NEED FOR CONFERRING AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES.

There had been discussion in the academic circles in India about the necessity to bring about qualitative changes in the higher education field in the line of autonomy to colleges. It will be worthwhile here to look into the reasons which led to the demand for autonomy to colleges in India.

At the time of independence there were only 21 universities and 636 affiliated or attached colleges to the universities all over India. In 1946-47, the enrollment of students in these institutions were a little above 2,41,996, including those for intermediate classes. By 1977-78 these numbers have increased to 118 universities and 4,610 colleges. The enrollment of

students into undergraduate courses (other than Inter/PUC/PDC,etc.) during the period from 1950-51 to 1977-78 increased from 1,73,692 to 25,64,972, six times increase in the case of universities, 7.7 times increase of colleges and 14.77 times increase of enrollments in twentyseven years time.

Table No.4.1  
Growth of Education in Independent India.

PARTICULARS	1950-51	1984-85	1987-88
1.Educational Institution	2,31,000	7,55,000	--
2.Total Enrollment	24 million	132 million	--
3.Educated Man Power	4 "	48 "	--
4.Enrollment for Post Graduate studies	20,000	3,22,541	3,62,370
5.Enrollment for Higher Edn.	1,73,692	34,04,096	38,81,870
6. " " Science sub.	4,400	6,53,092	7,51,440
7. " " Commerce	--	7,03,638	8,20,100
8. " for Arts & Humanities	--	13,38,106	15,37,210

Source: Chauhan 1990, UGC Annual Report 1987-88.

In the sixty's onwards the number of affiliated colleges has been growing so high that it has become almost impossible for the universities to carry out their basic functions of prescribing and updating the syllabi and conducting the examinations.

There was affiliation of the colleges to the universities, but

hardly any "affection" between them. Instead the former became "afflicted collages", (Narayan,1985). At the end of 1987-88, the total number of universities in the country was 179 with 6,597 colleges affiliated or attached to various universities with an enrollment of 38,81,870 students.

The University Grants Commission, in its booklet "Autonomous Colleges, Criteria, Guidelines and Pattern of Assistance", 1974, forcefully argues against the affiliating system of colleges. It says: "All attempts at reform of university education in the way of curriculum development, changes in the system of examination, promotion of research and its subsequent feedback into the teaching process, have tended in the last few years to get defeated by the existing rigidity in the structure of universities, particularly because of the absence of academic autonomy of the institutions.... The system of affiliation and mass examination, with all their backwash effects have not only distorted the learning process but have created enormous social problems in the way of corruption, terrorism and violence in the conduct of examinations.....In the case of the better colleges which have both the resources and the determination to do quality teaching, the control of the university in matters of curricula and examination has curbed all initiative and imposed a rigid structure of courses and examination. Such colleges feel that the affiliating system has prevented all their efforts towards modernisation and improvement".

The Revised Guidelines on the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges of

the UGC (1987) argues the case for autonomy in the following words: "Our society is diverse and its problems may vary from place to place. These need variation of approach, and the acute problems ask for quick response. The academic decisions also need quicker pace for making innovations and designing curricula and methods more relevant to the area in which an institution works. The affiliating system does not allow the required freedom to the colleges to meet the demands cast upon them. The existence of a large number of affiliated colleges in a university has become a drag on the process of modernisation and improvement of standards. The decision for bringing about innovations can be taken speedily in a smaller body and can also be implemented more effectively if it is acted upon by those who take the decision".

The need for providing autonomy has also been recognised in the National Policy on Education, 1986. It says: "In view of the mixed experience with the system of affiliation, autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers until the affiliating system is replaced by a free and more creative association of universities with colleges".

Thankaraj, (1980) the former Principal of American College, Madhurai, who introduced autonomy in the college, gives another strong argument for autonomy, namely "teaching, learning and evaluation is a trinity of academic functions which, to be effective, should be carried out by the same persons. In the present affiliating system teachers teach a curriculum

prescribed by some other body, and prepare their students to be examined by yet another body which has never met them, but which presumes to evaluate their attainment entirely through the medium of the written word, usually in an alien tongue. The teacher has responsibility neither for the course he teaches nor for the evaluation of the students he trains. His motivation is understandably low"

Thus all the shortcomings of the affiliating system call for a radical departure from this structure. Autonomy to colleges is one plausible way out. This will, if properly managed, enable the colleges to grow and make their existence meaningful, relevant and innovative.

#### 4.7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES ABOUT CONFERRING AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES.

There were a number of Commissions and Committees appointed for making recommendations to improve the quality of education at all levels. Almost all of them which were constituted after independence made a number of recommendations for giving varying degrees of autonomy to educational institutions. The recommendations of such Commissions relating to autonomy to colleges are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

##### (1) University Education Commission, 1949.

The University Education Commission, 1949, headed by Radhakrishnan examines the problems and prospects of higher education in India very extensively.

Its recommendations on university organisation, university finances, examination reforms, etc., are very significant. This report classified the then existing universities into four groups namely, (1) Unitary Teaching Universities; (2) Federative Teaching Universities, of which the sole example is the Delhi University in the country; (3) Teaching and affiliating Universities; and (4) Purely affiliating universities.

In the section about affiliating universities the Report says, "...it was in our opinion, a very unfortunate incident or accident, that India should have adopted this type from the model of London university just before London university itself abandoned this type...The purely affiliating university is hardly more than a machine for conducting examinations. This itself is a misfortune, since it suggests that examination is a university's main function, a profound delusion and one which has done great harm in India"

This report was for expanding the federative type of universities in India and to do away with the affiliating system in the long run. "We wish to break away from the old and, in our opinion, bad tradition by which the university dictated policy, chiefly in the shape of syllabus and examinations, to colleges which were organically outside the university itself. We hold strongly that the proper task of any college ranking at the university level is not simply to prepare for an external examination but to take its full part and responsibility in shaping the whole educational policy of the university to which

it belongs. This is so much taken for granted both in the United States and Great Britain and so little appreciated in our country...."

This Commission was very much outspoken about giving autonomy to educational institutions mainly with a view to safeguard them from external domination. It said: "We must resist, in the interest of our own democracy, the trend towards the government domination of the educational process...Higher education is, undoubtedly, an obligation of the state; but state aid is not to be confused with state control over academic policies and practices. Intellectual progress demands the maintenance of the spirit of free inquiry. The pursuit and practice of truth regardless of consequences has been the ambition of universities" (II.29)

#### (2) Report of the Committee on Colleges, 1962

In september, 1962 the UGC constituted a small Committee to advise the Commission on general policy to be followed in developing colleges. In April, 1964, this Committee was reconstituted with Dr. G.S.Mahanjani, the Vice-Chancellor of the university of Udaipur as the Chairman. It submitted a report in 1965. One section in the report deals with Autonomous colleges. Among its 52 recommendations, four were about autonomous colleges. The relevant section are quoted below:

As already stated above, 85% of the entire student population of India at the university level are in the affiliated colleges. A

considerable proportion of postgraduate and research work is being done in these colleges.....

"..... The rules and regulations framed by the universities and government are generally framed with a view to restraining malpractices of inefficient and wayward institutions. These rules are applied equally to all colleges, good, bad and indifferent. Quite often curbs are put on the initiative and freedom of better colleges....There is also the uniformity of syllabi, examination system and other inhibitory procedures which prevent an outstanding college from taking a bold initiative in academic matters....

One of the practical methods of improving the standards of higher education in India seems to be to select a few colleges on the basis of their past work, influence, tradition, maturity and academic standards and give them, what might be called for want of a better phrase, " autonomous status " with freedom to develop their personalities, experiment with new ideas, frame their own syllabi in consultation with the university, devise and conduct their examinations and initiate new movements. This does not mean that the autonomous colleges will have a university status. (Recommendation No.30)

The selection of colleges for autonomous status may be made on an all India basis by a competent committee appointed by the University Grants Commission and the universities concerned. The credentials of a college for continued recognition as an

autonomous institution may be examined from time to time(No.31). Talented students should be helped to join these institutions (Recommendation No.32).

Appropriate assistance may be given to these colleges by the University Grants Commission on a suitable basis(No.33). UGC,1967)

### (3) Education Commission 1964-66

There were intense academic exercises on the idea of autonomous colleges by educationists. This is evident from the Education' Commission's (1966) reference to the question of autonomous colleges "which has been under discussion for many years". Among the revolutionary recommendations of this Commission were the ideas of experimental schools, autonomous colleges and major universities.

About autonomy to colleges, the Report says: "Finally, we would like to refer to the question of autonomous colleges which has been under discussion for many years. Where there is an outstanding college or a small cluster of very good colleges within a large university, consideration should be given to granting it an autonomous status. This would involve the power to frame its own rules of admission, to prescribe its course of study, to conduct examinations, and so on. The parent university's role will be one of general supervision and the actual conferment of the degree. The privilege cannot be conferred once for all - it will have to be continually earned

and deserved - and it should be open to the university, after careful scrutiny of the position, to revoke the autonomous status if the college at any stage begins to deteriorate in its standards. We recommend that provision for the recognition for such colleges be made in the constitution of universities. It should be possible, in our opinion, by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan, to bring at least fifty of the best colleges under this category".

The idea of autonomous colleges should have been a challenge thrown open to all campuses.(John,1970). But its wordings by the commission did reflect an element of elitism making it a search for status to be conferred from above. Thus it reads:"...Where there is an outstanding college or a small cluster of very good colleges within a large university which has shown the capacity to improve itself markedly, consideration should be given to granting to it an autonomous status' (13.07). This boggy of elitism was raised by the college teachers to prevent the execution of this idea and it did not see the light of the day for twelve years after its recommendation by the Commission.

The implementation of this idea would deprive teachers of the chance to blame external agencies for deficiencies of the curricula, teaching methods and examinations. Instead of being the executors' of the university imposed external courses and curriculum, the teachers will have to be the creators of these and the decision makers on them. "This will relieve educational

authorities of the awful burden of having to take upon themselves the task of improving education everywhere, at all stages, in all subject" (John 1970).

The recommendations for conferring autonomy to colleges made by the Committee on colleges, 1965. appointed by the UGC and those made by the Kothari Education Commission just discussed, together form the foundation for the processes and academic exercises after 1966 which culminated in bringing about autonomy to 15 colleges all over India in the year 1978-79

Here at this point it has to be noted that the highest focus of attention in this matter is given to the recommendations of the Education Commission Report, 1966. In subsequent literature only these recommendations are referred to and discussed. However, it seems that the Commission has relied heavily on the recommendations made by the UGC Committee on Colleges for conferring autonomy to colleges, which fact gets hardly any recognition in the subsequent documentations and discussion on the subject. In fact, the recommendations of Education Commission, 1964-66, on autonomous colleges are slightly modified version of the discussion and recommendations No.30 and 31 of the UGC Committee, on Colleges.

(4) Ministry of Education Committee on Autonomous Colleges, 1966.

Following the recommendations of the Education Commission for autonomy to colleges, the Ministry of Education appointed a Committee in November, 1966 to study the relevant aspects of

this recommendation. On the basis of its report the Government of India accepted in 1967 the idea of autonomy as an educational policy to be implemented and entrusted the UGC to pursue it further.

(5) Report of the UGC Committee on Autonomous Colleges, 1966

The University Grants Commission constituted in 1967 a Committee to study the feasibility and practical steps for implementing the proposal for autonomous colleges. The Committee's recommendations include:

(1) That autonomy be given to one or two colleges under each university on an experimental basis with a view to raising standards and encouraging the pursuit of excellence;

(2) That the criteria for selection of colleges for autonomy may be good students, good staff, good facilities and good management;

(3) That the proposal for conferment of autonomy on any institution should originate with the university and the college concerned. The UGC may be associated with the process of selection, but the primary responsibility has to be undertaken by the university;

(4) That autonomous colleges may be permitted to modify the syllabus, prescribe their own admission policy and devise their own assessment procedures;

(5) That the approach has to be flexible and there may be graduated scale of autonomy for institutions depending on their performance and achievements in various fields.

(6) That the degree in autonomous colleges should be given by the parent university, but the name of the college should be specifically mentioned; and

(7) That development grants on a liberal basis should be provided for the development of autonomous colleges.

The Education Commission's suggestion was to bring at least fifty of the best colleges under autonomy by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan, i.e., by 1974. As per the policy decision of the Government of India, 1967, the UGC issued circulars to universities in November 1968 inviting proposals for autonomy and asking them to recommend colleges for conferring autonomous status. Only two universities are known to have chosen to respond. Three colleges also responded directly to the UGC.

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(6) Committee on the Governance of Universities and Colleges, 1971.

The UGC's Committee on the Governance of Universities and colleges ascribed the lack of progress in giving effect to the fact that 'in legislative enactments governing most of the universities no provision has been made to provide for autonomous colleges'. Therefore it recommended that in university acts such provisions should be made and proposed a model.

The other reasons forwarded for the inertia were that there was hardly any conceptual clarifications about the working modalities of autonomous colleges, and the ensuing relationship between the universities and the colleges.

(7) Tamil Nadu Perspective Plan Proposals for Autonomy to Colleges.

The Tamil Nadu Perspective Plan proposed in 1968 a system of autonomous colleges under which certain number of colleges are granted autonomy in the development of courses of study, methods of teaching and learning from the intermediate to M.A, M.Sc., and M.Com. levels and the State's Fifth Plan provided for setting up of six such colleges. But this proposal also was not implemented.

(8) Central Advisory Board of Education's Endorsement for Autonomy to Colleges.

No autonomous college could be started during the Fourth Plan period. In 1972, the 36th session of the Central Advisory Board of Education endorsed the Education Commission's recommendation on autonomous colleges, adding that at least 5 per cent of the colleges should be made autonomous by the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan i.e., by 1979 March.

(9) UGC Guidelines on Autonomous Colleges, 1974.

As a second step the UGC set up a Committee in 1973 to suggest the criteria for selection of colleges for autonomous status and the guidelines and patterns of assistance. The Committee

submitted its recommendations in 1973-74. As a result, the UGC came up in 1974 with a document called "Autonomous Colleges, Criteria, Guidelines and Patterns of Assistance". It also made strong recommendations to universities to amend their statutes in order to make provision for autonomous colleges.

Some universities did amend their statutes to incorporate provisions for autonomous colleges, but most others did not do anything in this direction. They did not want to confer autonomy to colleges which they thought would dilute their power and authority over the colleges. And among the colleges too there were no many takers for this idea. Autonomy was meant for restoring freedom to teachers to teach and its essential condition, the freedom to learn. But unfortunately, the will to be free was conspicuous by its absence.

In the foregoing survey it was attempted to trace back the genealogy of the idea of autonomy to colleges. It is clear that autonomy was not a concept without a history behind and that considerable amount of thinking and deliberations have taken place in the past decades almost right from the beginning of the century and even legislative acts have been passed for introducing autonomy to colleges. Now that a beginning has been made in this regard which is going to be discussed shortly. The beginnings already made are not without its starting troubles. Therefore it is worthwhile here to look at the objectives of introducing autonomy to colleges and the reasons for opposition to this move before the institutional deliberation and actions

are discussed in detail

#### 4.8. CLARIFYING THE OBJECTIVES OF INTRODUCING AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES

The need for conferring autonomy to colleges has been explained and the recommendations of various Commissions and Committees on this issue have been briefly discussed. These recommendations give some of the objectives of conferring autonomy to colleges, sometimes explicitly and sometimes in an implied manner. In identifying such objectives these Commissions have heavily relied on the writings, suggestions and opinions of academics and educational administrators in the country. However, it cannot be said that this processes had brought out all the possible objectives of autonomy; nor can it be said that these are the only objectives of autonomy which are employed by the practioners of autonomy. Hence there is need for codifying these objectives as far as possible in a systematic manner. Besides, it would be beneficial at this stage to give some conceptual clarifications also about the objectives of autonomy. This section is devoted to this purpose.

In addition to the other sources used and referred to elsewhere, specifically the following sources have been used in this survey in order to arrive at the objectives of autonomy and to study the institutional initiatives.

(1) New Frontiers of Education, IV, 2, April-June 1974:

(i) D.Sankar Narayan, Towards a University with Autonomous  
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Colleges (ii) John V.V. Freedom to Teach: The Idea of the Autonomous College. (iii) Adisheshiah, Malcolm S., Objectives of an Autonomous college. (iv) Singh, Amrik, Autonomous Colleges, the Problem of Governance.

(2) Subbayan R., Autonomous Colleges and Departments, Seminar Paper, National Conference on the Role of Universities in the Implementation of NEP, Hyderabad, December, 1987.

(3) Loyola College (1985) Five Years of Autonomy, Articles by:

- (i) M.Santhappa, Presidential address;
- (ii) D.Shankar Narayan, Inaugural Address;
- (iii) V.V.John, Key- Note address.

(4) PSG College of Arts and Science: Aims, and Objectives of Autonomous Colleges, (Monograph)(1978).

(5) Association of University Teachers, Tamil Nadu Unit, (1983), Convention on Autonomous Colleges, Souvenir.

(6) Workshop on college Autonomy papers (1988), of Madhura Kamaraj University;

(7) Seminar Papers, (1972), of St.Xavier's College, Bombay.

Autonomy as described in the Education Commission Report, 1966, and as incorporated in the UGC Revised Guidelines, (1987) is "the FREEDOM for the college to:

- determine its own course of study and syllabi;
- prescribe rules of admission subject, of course, to the reservation policy of the state government; and
- evolve methods of evaluation and to conduct examinations.

The autonomy shall rather be a means to achieve higher standards and greater activity in the future".

Through the exercise of such freedom the autonomous colleges are expected to achieve higher standards and greater creativity, to ensure accountability in institutions and their members, and to promote national integration.

Freedom to perform these functions is considered as the objectives of autonomous colleges and nowhere it is seen that this freedom is extended to the colleges to define their own objectives. May be it is presumed that the three-fold freedoms enumerated contains or subsumes the objectives of autonomous colleges.

But many educational thinkers and executives thought it necessary to clearly define the objectives of autonomy in general and the same for each institution in particular. Given below are the general formulation of the objectives of autonomous colleges as evolved in and through various consultations, seminars, workshops, individual writings, etc. Adiseshiah (1974) who had played a leading role in bringing about autonomy to colleges in India especially in Tamil Nadu and who was also the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras just before introducing autonomy to colleges in 1978, enunciates three degree of objectives of an autonomous college. In brief, they are:

Primary Objective: A primary objective of an autonomous college should be the pursuit of knowledge which serves the development

of its neighbouring community and the country. Identification of the local community's or the country's needs is the first task of the autonomous college.

A second primary objective of an autonomous college is to ensure the employability of its students. Employability requires on the one hand capacity for adaptation, improvisation and innovativeness and on the other hand a combination of manual technical and technological skills which are not vocational as much as pre-vocational. Employability also involves the capacity to be able to stand on one's own, to face and take the risks involved in self-employment, together with the ability to cover the risks and to exude a sense of pride and sturdy independence in what one sets one's hands to.

Secondary Objectives: A secondary objective of the autonomous college should be the individualisation of its teaching and learning programmes. The one to one relationship of the teacher and the taught is the heart of all education and it must be preserved and recreated, and extended to the deprived sections of our population.

Another secondary objective of the autonomous college is the promotion and development of research capability and involvement of its staff and students. Teaching and learning in their turn should provide both pointers and guide posts as to what should be researched as well as a test and crucible of the reality of what is investigated. The research required and the investigation needed will be suggested by the college's

obligation to pursue knowledge which serves the need of the local community or the country. And just as teaching will feed into research, so too investigations will enrich learning.

An elaboration of the general objectives of autonomy is given below. These are collected from various orientation papers and documents, policy statements, guidelines, directives, etc., as mentioned above. Such objectives may be stated as:

(i) Identification of emerging needs of man power development, education and training in the light of knowledge explosion and changing needs of man power requirements and designing of new courses and programmes to meet these needs:

(ii) Improvement of quality, relevance and effectiveness of courses and of student learning and development through:

(a) modifying and updating of syllabi and curricula and orienting them to the specific and changing needs of society;

(b) organisation of curriculum to provide flexibility with regard to student aptitudes and interests; (c) devising curriculum strategies to develop in the students skills of self-learning, and problem solving, trans-disciplinary perceptions, social awareness, practical approach to problems and situations, etc., by such means as project work, field training, exposure to creative and challenging situations calling for application of knowledge; (d) reform and diversification of evaluation structures and teaching methods so

as to make them effective instruments of fostering originality, continuous learning skills, creative application of knowledge, etc. (e) creation of effective and diverse teaching learning situations and methodologies;

(f) establishment of closer links and interaction with the probable employers like banks, commercial undertaking, civil service organisation, industry, etc., in planning courses and instruction modules to integrate training with learning; and (g) developing guidance, counseling and placement services for the motivation of students.

(iii) Furtherance of research design development and consultancy and extension both to serve the institution's commitment to social needs and to invest it with a sense of realism and purpose which will enrich its educational activity.

(iv) To enhance the sense of participation, responsibility and purpose among teachers and build up their effectiveness and competence by involving them with all aspects of the educational process, and offering them opportunities and incentives for development.

(v) An autonomous college would imply a spirit of adventure and exploration on the part of the academic community which will encourage innovation and experimentation, introduce flexibility in the system and will be an effective challenge to conservatism, rigidity and timidity in trying out new ideas.

(vi) Autonomous colleges can effectively experiment with novel ideas of education based on work experience, religious and moral

education, studies based on great issues faced by mankind, value oriented education, internal and continuous assessment, semester system, better use of libraries, open book examination, etc.

(vii) Affiliating universities have to treat all colleges equally, but there are variations as to quality of instruction and staff, size of the institution, efficiency of management, enjoyment of academic and administrative freedom by the staff, freedom from political interferences, and pressure groups, etc. According to these variations of the environment, autonomous colleges can undertake more venturesome programmes and excel in them and instill a sense of healthy competition among colleges.

(viii) In autonomous colleges work and study can be reoriented by new methods of work assignment, group work, learning by doing, seminars, symposia, field study, case study, project work, etc. Thus the creative energies of the students can be better employed and proper study and work habits could be inculcated.

(ix) The ultimate aim of autonomous college is to grow into a status and capability of awarding own degrees and diplomas independent of the parent university. For this it will have to get itself established for its capacity efficiency, excellence, relevance, administration and above all in the quality of its products. Autonomous colleges will be a way for excellence without being forced to go along with the mediocre or the average. Different colleges have attained varying degrees

of perfection in achieving all or some of these objectives. All the objectives stated may not be relevant, practical and uniformly applicable to every college. In fact, autonomous colleges should be a welcome departure from uniformity. Each college has to develop its own objectives and its own individuality in order to justify their status as autonomous institutions. Attempts are made by most colleges in these directions.

#### 4.9. OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST CONFERRING AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES.

Autonomy to colleges was not an idea equally acceptable to all. There has been very strong sections opposed to this idea in the governments, in the universities and among other academics. The All India Federation of University and College Teachers Associations (AIFUCTA), as an organised body, has been opposing the idea of autonomous colleges. The Association of University Teachers, Tamil Nadu, as associate member of the AIFUCTA, conducted a three day convention on Autonomous Colleges in 1983, and published in their Souvenir the papers presented in the Convention. Out of eight papers published, authors are not acknowledged for six. In addition, four workshop group reports are also published. It may not be an exaggeration if one were to say that the papers and reports do not have anything good or positive to say about autonomous colleges. It would have been more appropriate to have named the conference as 'Convention against autonomy, rather than Convention on Autonomy. Perhaps this negative attitude explains why the authors of most of the

articles chose to be anonymous.

Some of the reasons for the resistance to the supposedly noble idea of autonomy to colleges were:

(i) Education is in the concurrent list necessitating the coming together of the state and central governments for the implementation of any such recommendations. Though the Central Govt. and its executive organ for higher educational policy, the UGC, were ready to implement the programme, the state governments were apprehensive about the curtailment of their power and control and also about the consequent added financial responsibilities on the state by conferring autonomy to the colleges.

(ii) Most of the affiliating universities have been complaining against the intolerable burden on their shoulders to look after hundreds of colleges affiliated to them. (There were times when more than 211 colleges were affiliated to one university, Calcutta University, 1972). These universities were also fighting for greater autonomy from the government control. But they themselves were not willing to grant autonomy to colleges for fear of losing their grip and control over them.

(iii) Though autonomous colleges were a major recommendation of the Kothari Education Commission, except stray individual initiatives and suggestions by some colleges, no specific guidelines or detailed modalities of their working were available and agreed upon by the various agencies involved. This was so at least till 1974 when the UGC came up with a set

of guidelines.

(iv) Since the whole idea came from the Central Government agencies down to the colleges and to the teachers, there was lack of confidence and preparedness on the part of the teachers to accept the idea.

(v) The Commission's recommendation was to make a selection from among the best colleges in the country. This created an ideological dissent from the part of a major section of the academics who were fighting for undiluted socialism. They brought up the boggy of elitism in higher education in the concept of autonomous colleges.

(vi) There was apprehension among the teaching community that their rights and privileges may be curtailed in the new set up wherein they envisaged an enhanced power for the management of the colleges.

(vii) There was a great apprehension that standards in education would come down by tampering with the examining system and inflating the marks and success percentage of students by individual colleges.

(viii) Restructuring of curricular programmes involved in the autonomous colleges was a major task. It meant incorporating as many of the new experimentations in vogue in higher education as possible and further adding many more. The individual colleges were not geared to take up these tasks. The colleges required

for such toning up considerable amount of finance and other infra-structural backing from the universities, state governments and the UGC, which were not assured.

These and many such problems were agitating the minds of the teachers, college managements and university planners and administrators. In spite of these problems and objections, there were some colleges which took the matter of autonomy seriously and so were engaged in creative discussions and action programmes. Some of such activities are discussed below.

#### 4.10. INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES TOWARDS AUTONOMY FOR COLLEGES.

While the official agencies like the Government, the University Grants Commission and the Universities were going on with their deliberations and modifications of their views and positions, there were pioneering institutions who were seriously and actively engaged in collective thinking and formulating plans for the future.

##### (1) American College, Madhurai.

American college, Madhurai, which started its collegiate education in 1881 and currently affiliated to Madhura Kamaraj University in Tamil Nadu, under the able leadership of Dr. Thankaraj, the then principal, undertook a self study of the college from 1967 onwards, to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses of the college and the "directions in which we would develop if we had the freedom and the resources".

It was a six year long reflection, and soul-searching, deliberations and institutional preparations. At the end of it the college submitted in October, 1973, its application for autonomy to the Madhurai(Kamaraj) University which itself came into existence just eight years ago, in 1965. The university recommended to the UGC that autonomy be given to the college. The UGC responded in May 1974 and asked the college to prepare comprehensive proposals embodying its programmes, plans and financial needs for five years under autonomy. Many departmental and interdepartmental committees were at work in the college for working out the details and drawing up the plans for autonomy. The college submitted the document entitled "Our Five-Year Plan for Autonomy" to the UGC, the University and the state government in November, 1974.

In the same year Madhurai Kamaraj University amended its Acts of 1965 to incorporate autonomous colleges under its purview and sent the amendment to the state government to be passed by the legislature. Three years passed without happening anything and at last, in August 1977, the New Government at Madras passed the amendment to the Madhurai University Act, which received the President's assent in December, 1977. In April, 1978, the Syndicate of the Madhurai University resolved to confer the status of autonomy on the American College with effect from the year 1978-79. Three other colleges under the university were also granted autonomy at the same time.

(2) Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar.

Academic community in many other parts of the country was engaged in serious discussions about autonomy. Thus the Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar in Maharashtra, organised a three-day staff seminar on March 14, 15 & 16, 1973, on "Preparing Guidelines on the working of Autonomous Colleges". This was a thorough exercise which clearly spelt out the outlines for the administrative and academic structures of the colleges. Many of these outlines find a place in the Revised Guidelines on the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges brought out by the UGC in 1987. In fact, Ahmednagar college had brought out a book about the college which is a self evaluation as well as profile of this college which, though unfortunately still non-autonomous, shows a high degree of innovative spirit and autonomy in its working.

(3) South Gujarath University, Gujarath.

South Gujarat University, Surat organised a two day seminar, at MTB Arts College, Surat, on 23rd & 24th February, 1975 on autonomous colleges.

(4) Madras Christian College, Madras.

Similar exercises were going on in many other institutions. Some of them were trying to improve their performance and venture into innovative avenues even within the affiliating set up itself. Thus the Madras Christian College, Madras, conducted a self study of the college involving the faculty, administrators, student representatives, trustees, alumni and

parents. They brought out two publications on the basis of this study. They are: (1) Rethinking of our Role as a College (1964) and (2) Developing a College in a Developing India (1965). As a result of this study they established in the college many institutions such as Students Counseling and Guidance Centre, Alumni and Public Relations Office, the college Farm, etc. All these changes effected an infra-structure for the advent of autonomy for the college.

Along with these, curricular innovations were also tried out in the college. Thus the Economic Department had devised a new design with innovative proposals for the study of economics in the context of Indian conditions. This venture got wide publicity in academic circles all over India. Later on Madras University incorporated these new proposals in its courses design and curriculum. As a consequence of these and similar activities, when autonomy was proposed, Madras Christian College had already a climate for its adoption and they worked on it with enthusiasm.

The history of the introduction of autonomy to colleges indicates that mostly it was the principals of affiliated colleges who had played the prominent role in attempts at bringing about autonomy to colleges. Evidences are not plentiful to show that every autonomous college had involved the then faculty, in the thinking and planning stages of bringing about autonomy to the institutions. In some colleges autonomy was introduced as a result of the decision of the

college managements which in most cases were private trusts.

In some colleges there is a long history of the faculty's involvement in evolving the conceptual frame work of autonomy and its various working modalities. Some colleges claim to have undergone decade-long deliberations and discussions. Thus, the Report A (1981) of Lady Doak College, Madhurai, says: "The 'impossible dream' of autonomy was implanted in this college by the Kothari Commission in its visit in 1965. Ever since autonomy has been the goal of the governing council. Faculty preparations began with self-study in the various departments in 1968" (1981,1).

There were such faculty preparations in American College, Madhurai, MCC, Madras, Loyola, Madras etc. In these colleges, often implicitly or explicitly, prompted by the principals, the staff members were engaged in lively discussion, both formal and informal, about the working modalities of the autonomous functioning of the colleges. They have started such active interactions at least from 1972 onwards. According to the present and previous principals of many colleges, when they sent proposals to the university in response to the 1974 UGC guidelines, most of the staff members in these colleges were fully for autonomy. There was an intervening period of apparent inaction from the part of the universities and the UGC between 1974 and 1978. During this period the Teachers' Unions in Tamil Nadu became very active and started propaganda against the introduction of autonomous colleges. The reasons as per the

observation made by most managements and some senior faculty members from the colleges, were mostly misguided apprehensions and some vested interests. Due to the influence of such propaganda a negligible section of the staff turned out to be not so happy about the idea of autonomy by the time it was introduced in 1978.

#### Student involvement in preparing for autonomy

In practice, to involve on a long-standing basis the body of students whose composition changes every year is not that easy, if not impossible. Besides, involvement of an existing group of students for a future programme in which they will have little participation is a practical difficulty. There is hardly any hard evidence in the documents available to show that the students were seriously involved by most colleges in the deliberations about autonomy to the colleges. However, indications are there that some colleges like the American College, Madurai; MCC, Madras etc. did involve some students in such activities to bring about autonomy to the respective colleges.

If the details of all those initiatives were to be narrated this discussion would be too lengthy and unwieldy. It is hoped that these samples of preparations would serve the purpose of illustrating how the institutions were making earnest preparations for autonomy in different parts of the country.

#### 4.11. PROCESSES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR CONFERRING AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES.

These institutional initiatives had their facilitating effect on the national thinking. May be the application for autonomy submitted by the American college, Madhurai in 1973 prompted the University Grants Commission to once again send out a circular to the universities along with a newly formulated guidelines and patterns of assistance, asking them to recommend colleges for conferring the status of autonomy, depending on their desire for the same. Dr.Malcolm Adisheshiah was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras at that time and he was very much in favour of granting autonomy to colleges. According to some of the principals of the colleges at that time, Dr.Adisheshiah prompted them to apply for autonomy.

As a result, eight colleges affiliated to the University of Madras sent in their proposals and applications for getting autonomous status for themselves. Three other colleges affiliated to the Madhurai Kamaraj University also, in addition to the American College, applied for the status of autonomy with their detailed proposals. Necessary amendments were made in the University of Madras Act and in the Madhurai Kamaraj University Act. These amendments to the Universities' Acts were passed by the Government of Tamil Nadu in August, 1977.

(1) Proposals to be sent to the universities and to the UGC by the Colleges along with applications for autonomous status.

The universities and the UGC demanded detailed proposals from

the colleges regarding their aims of autonomy, curricular strategies, academic programmes, evaluation schemes, organisation plans, financial plans, etc. All the colleges sent in their proposals in these matters.

Such a proposal prepared by PSG college of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, is a good model available. Its contents in brief are given below:

(2) The Contents (in outline) of the Regulations and Programmes for BA, BSc, B.Com., MA, MSc, M.Com, in PSG College of Arts and Science, coimbatore.

The contents of the Regulations, and Programmes, 1978 (in outlines) for B.A, B.Sc, B.Com, M.A, M.Sc and M.Com. are given below. (This big volume contains all the details of such regulations and is part of the proposals sent to the University/UGC).

(i) Programmes offered (Details of Courses); (ii) Qualifications for Admission; (iii) Eligibility for Award of Degree; (iv) Duration of Semesters; (v) Courses of Study; (vi) Distribution of Instructional hours for various Semesters (vii) Minimum attendance required to appear for comprehensive examinations; (viii) Commencement of comprehensive examinations (ix) Scheme of examinations; (x) Passing level; (xi) Conduct of comprehensive examinations; (xii) Classification of successful candidates; (xiii) Facility to

appear in a course or courses passed already; (xiv) (a). Provision to re-total answer books; (b). Provision to re-value answer books; (c). Provision to appeal for re-publication of continuous assessment marks.

Such proposals were sent by all the colleges which applied for autonomy, but with varying degree of details and specifications.

#### 4.12. CONFERRING OF AUTONOMY TO COLLEGES

With the concurrence of the state government and the UGC the two universities of Tamil Nadu issued sanctioning letters to the above mentioned twelve colleges, conferring on them autonomous status. The letter of the University of Madras is published by the UGC in its Revised Guidelines on the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges as Annexure XI. These documents have strictly adhered to the wordings of the recommendations of the Committee on Colleges, the Education Commission Report 1966, and the UGC circular, 1974, in defining the powers of autonomy.

##### 4.12.1. EXTENT OF AUTONOMY

According to the documents sent to the colleges, autonomy means: freedom to:(i) frame courses of studies; (ii) arrange for instruction of students; (iii) devise methods of evaluation of students leading to the award of degree/diploma to them by the university, (iv) admission of students, etc.

##### 4.12.2. CONDITIONS OF AUTONOMY

Autonomy is granted subject to the conditions that:

i) admission policy should conform to the minimum qualifications

laid by the university for the courses of study and to the rules of reservation of candidates belonging to scheduled castes/tribes;

ii) for a period of five years from the academic year 1978-79, and subject to review of the functioning of the college at the end of three years, and

iii) under the competence of the Syndicate to extend the period beyond five years on an application made by the college.

Sanctioning of autonomy and derecognition of the same in case of deteriorating standards are under the purview of the Syndicate of the Universities.

Finally 12 colleges started functioning as autonomous institutions from the year 1978-79 onwards under the area of the university of Madras (8), and Madurai Kamaraj University(4).

#### 4.12.3. AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES OUTSIDE TAMIL NADU

Three institutions outside Tamil Nadu were also conferred with autonomy in 1978, one Technical Institute in Ranchi, Bihar, one rural institute in Sanosara, Bhavananagar, Gujarat and one Physical Education College in Gwalior, M.P. Four more colleges in Tamil Nadu became autonomous in the next five years making the total number of autonomous colleges 19 at the end of Sixth Plan 1983.84. In 1986-87 and 87-88, there were further expansion of autonomous colleges to other states. Thus, there are autonomous colleges now in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and

Rajasthan in addition to those states which had autonomous colleges from 1978-79 onwards. More details in this regard are shown in Table No.4.2.

Table No.4.2

Growth of Autonomous Colleges in India between 1978-79 and 87-88

States	1978-79	1983-84	1986-87	1987-88
1. Tamil Nadu	12	16	40	46
2. Andhra Pradesh	-	-	11	19
3. Madhya Pradesh	1	1	12	25
4. Rajasthan	-	-	4	4
5. Bihar*	1	1	1	-
6. Gujarat	1	1	1	1
TOTAL IN INDIA	15	19	68	95

Source: UGC Annual Report. 1987-88, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, Annual Report, 1988-89.

\* -Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi, Bihar, became autonomous college in 1978-79 and remained so till 1986-87 in which year it was declared an Institution Deemed to be University, and so ceased to be counted as an autonomous college.

#### 4.13. CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing pages attempts were made to survey the history of higher education in India through its stages of evolution which culminated in the establishment, to be precise, to the restoring, of autonomy to colleges. Thus it has been observed that:



(1) India has a very long history of higher education.

(2) Her higher educational institutions were originally autonomous in character.

(3) Infringement was made to the autonomous character of these institutions along with the establishment of affiliating universities by the colonial rulers.

(4) There were many attempts to regain autonomy for colleges.

(5) There have been also forces opposing autonomy to colleges.

(6) While attempting to regain autonomy to colleges, various objectives for autonomous colleges were evolved based on the manpower requirements and developmental needs of the country.

(7) There were notable institutional attempts to regain and strengthen and to redefine autonomy to colleges in the modern times.

(8) The idea of autonomy in the modern sense was evolved through a very long historical process and that many academics and administrators individually and in groups as Commissions and committees have contributed to the development of the idea of autonomy to colleges; and finally,

(9) Autonomy was conferred on a few colleges in India in the year 1978-79 to which some additions were made later on.

Thus in this innovation of autonomy to colleges in India there is a vision for self growth in higher education. It is also an

innovation which takes into account the totality of tertiary level education in the country. In that way this is a subject which should catch the attention of educators and planners in India and elsewhere.

Now this survey has been relying on the content analysis of various documents. Mostly, secondary data were made use of in this survey. In the next chapter the process of introducing autonomy to colleges in the modern times and the programmes of running colleges autonomously are analysed in detail on the basis of the survey conducted for the purpose.