

# SARDAR PATEL UNIVERSITY

Next decade of development of  
Universities in Gujarat.

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## 1. Introduction

Founded in 1955 December, as Sardar Vallabhbhai Vidyapeeth, S. P. University is now full 26 years old. I had the good fortune of working on this campus for more than seven years prior to its becoming a university campus and we the teachers and students in those days had our own dreams about a university at Vallabh Vidyanagar. Unfortunately (for me at least) I left Vidyanagar in 1955 November just a few days before the incorporation of the university. But to-day I see that the university as developed during the last 25 years has fulfilled most of <sup>our</sup> those dreams. This was largely because many of the dreamers of that day (unlike me) continued on the campus and made distinct efforts to realise those dreams.

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In a developing society dreams also should go on evolving with time and so the silver jubilee celebrations of this promising academic institution is the right occasion to spell out fresh ideas about how the development should proceed. I am grateful to the organisers of this programme for giving me an opportunity of setting forward my dreams about the next decade of development of universities in Gujarat. These dreams are bound to be radically different from those we had 25 years back because the society to-day is radically different from what it was ~~then~~ 25 years back! As a matter of fact 25 years is too big a period for a <sup>a</sup> developing society like ours and the organisers of this seminar have a very valid logic in limiting the considerations of seminar to the next decade of development.

I shall begin with the basics of <sup>our</sup> the university structure in relation to the needs of a rapidly developing society

## 2. Macaulay's legacy

Notwithstanding several education commissions'

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reports one cannot escape the fact that basically the education system (including, of ~~course~~ course, the university system) has been evolving on the lines laid down by British rulers in the middle of the last century when the so called western education was first introduced in India by Lord Macaulay. And obviously the British rulers had no intention of introducing a system that would suit a developing society that we are to-day. As a matter of fact we must give full credit to the British rulers for frankly expressing their intention in introducing this educational system in our country. We quote Lord Macaulay: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern, a class of persons Indian in <sup>to</sup> blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.

It is clear that this system was never intended to serve the needs of the society and so it is no wonder that it has remained largely unaffected by the recent socio-economic changes in the society. A circumstance which leads us to believe that over the years we might have effected some changes here or there, but we have not been able to <sup>move</sup> away from the basis initiated by Macaulay, is that our educational structure is not responsive to the everchanging economic, social, political or

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cultural needs of the society. And an educational system which is not responsive to the needs of the society will not <sup>owe</sup> ~~own~~ any responsibility towards it. Thus education as laid down by Macaulay ceases to be a social phenomena! A byproduct of this situation is that the values nurtured by <sup>such an</sup> ~~this~~ educational system are not values dictated by the norms of the society, they are the values artificially implanted in the system by the rulers of the day. As a result the inbuilt self-correcting system of maintaining values and standards as demanded by the changing ~~society~~ society is largely absent in our ~~my~~ education and in our educational institutions. We have the familiar experience of colleges and universities going on merrily in their set routine even when their products no longer meet or fit the demands of the society.

This is the legacy of history inherited by our entire educational system, ~~we shall~~ which we must take into consideration while discussing the development decade for universities in Gujarat.

3 The Affiliating Universities: When we talk about universities in Gujarat the picture that immediately comes to our minds is that of affiliated colleges.

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With the solitary exception of M.S. University (which has fortunately resisted upto now all attempts to get colleges affiliated to it) every other university has a string of ~~affiliated~~ affiliated colleges. Since colleges form the building blocks on which the entire edifice of university education in Gujarat rests, a large chunk of our efforts at development should ~~have been~~ <sup>be</sup> devoted to development of colleges. But here we are faced with a contradiction. As per methods adopted by the U.C.C., a development plan of a university essentially means development of institutions and departments run by the university. But the affiliated colleges in Gujarat are not being "run" by the University they are not covered by the development plans (or 5-year plans) under the U.C.C. norms!

When we are discussing the next decade of development of universities in Gujarat, the contradiction mentioned above becomes very relevant. Our discussions should not follow the normal pattern of discussions on U.C.C. 5-year plans or prospective 10-year plan. Adequate attention should also be paid to development of undergraduate education which in context of Gujarat may very well be termed as College education.

### 4. Responsiveness and Responsibility.

One advantage of the system of affiliation

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colleges is that of ~~dece~~ decentralization. The highly academic <sup>towering</sup> status of the university is distributed, so to say, over a large area through each college unit and the society at large feels that the University is at its doorstep when it sees a college in the neighbourhood. But the evolution of our affiliating universities has been towards more and more centralization with the result that over the years, the affiliated colleges have become a burden (shall we say - Ivory tower's burden!) to the university. And the effects are clearly visible in the area of responsiveness of the university system to the needs of the society.

As far as the society, in general, is concerned this responsiveness of the university system is largely measured by the responsiveness of colleges. But in the highly centralized system prevailing at present, the colleges have a passive, nay an inactive, role to play in this regard. It is only the university, as distinct from individual colleges which is supposed to determine this response. The colleges have on an average ~~10~~ 10 representatives for 100 colleges on the "responsive" bodies of the University.

The result is that colleges have been reduced

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to post offices transmitting whatever is determined under the University tower to their students and then passing on these students at the end of a year (or at the end of a semester, what difference does it make, any way!) to the university tower for assessment! To whom are the colleges responsible for their teaching? Practically to no one. What serves as motivation for a college to attain and maintain high standards? Nothing, so far as the university system is concerned. If a student passing through a college course are unacceptable to the society, the blame goes to the university and not to the college concerned. And yet the role of the university in moulding a student is negligible compared to the role of his college.

We have allowed this unnatural evolution of a centralized system in our university education during the last 25 years or so. In any future development plan I would put top priority on seeing that colleges are given more active role in determining the responsiveness of the education it imparts to the needs of the society and thus become responsible to the society. This is what I understand by the term autonomous colleges. In the next decade of development of affiliating universities in Gujarat we must concentrate largely on the autonomy of colleges in this sense.

5. Universities in a developing society

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I would end by pointing to another important area in which special attention be paid in the next decade of development. One of the distinguishing features of a developing society is that it wishes to attain in a short span of time a level of development attained by developed societies in a natural manner during over a long span of time (more than 100 years!). For this ~~accelerated~~ accelerated pace of development a developing society cannot adopt as a model the course followed by the already developed societies. They would have to evolve their own strategy of accelerated development using the knowhow ~~and experiences~~ of developed societies combining with their own ~~research~~ research experiences. Universities are best suited to take up this type of work. Unfortunately to-day we cannot say the Universities in Gujarat are involved in this task of evolving a strategy of rapid development though <sup>our</sup> ~~our~~ State is ~~already~~ has already embarked on an accelerated development programme.

The Universities in Gujarat should not only respond to the present-day needs of our society, but should foresee the needs of future in an accelerated phase of development and prepare the ~~manpower~~ to-day the man power of tomorrow.

This is another issue on which we must lay stress in the next decade of development.

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### 6. Concluding Remarks.

In conclusion I would mention two main points which I tried to make in this talk.

(i) ~~The~~ university In the next decade efforts be made to make the university system responsive to the needs of the society especially by making its affiliated colleges so responsive.

(ii) Universities must combine its own high level scientific and social sciences research programmes with the existing experiences of already developed societies to help in accelerating the pace of development in our country and in Gujarat in particular.

It will be seen that in the above I have concerned myself with the issue "How best can we plan the next development decade for our universities so that universities become more relevant to our society." I thought that would be the right keynote to ~~come up the~~ ~~do~~ ~~time~~ up the discussions in the seminar to follow.

