

# Contribution of Ashutosh Mukhopadhyaya as a reformer of Calcutta University

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**ABSTRACT:** Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyaya was a legendary figure in the field of higher education in India. He was a great scholar. He was the first learner of Calcutta University who obtained double master degree both in Mathematics and Physics. He was a man of eminent personality with high self-respect, and possessed a fearless mind and high administrative potentiality. He had different innovative ideas regarding Indian higher education. Ashutosh served Calcutta University in many ways. He was a member of senate and syndicate as well as president of the Board of Studies in Mathematics in the Calcutta University. He was appointed as the Tagore Professor of Calcutta University in 1897. He became Vice- chancellor of Calcutta University for the fifth time for the period of 1906 –1914 and 1921 – 1923. As Vice- chancellor, he had taken a lot of initiatives and he brought revolutionary changes in curriculum, teaching method & educational administration of Calcutta University. He was a great supporter of university autonomy. He always uttered, “Freedom first, freedom second, and freedom always.” He always tried his best to keep and maintained autonomy of university. He changes the direction of academic life of the Calcutta University. Under his leadership the Calcutta University became a great and reputed centre of teaching, learning and research in India. In this context, researchers intend to study the development of Calcutta University under the leadership of Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyaya.

**KEY WORDS:** University Autonomy, Innovative Ideas, Higher Education, Administrative Potentiality etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya's contribution towards the development of higher education in India remains almost unparalleled not only in the history of India, but also in the world. When we talk about all academic freedom in the university like Legislation, Ordinances, statutes, model acts, we tend to forget, the universities depend for their vitality on individuals, not in measures. A University is always judged by its academic freedom, ability to attract the best talents, communication of knowledge, nurture the talents, ideal teaching-learning environment and create the most favourable conditions for research. Under the leadership of Sir Asutosh Mukherjee this ideals of a university became virtually alive during the 1906-1924. It is also recalled that though Asutosh was an educationist as well as a great patriot of the country India, a great leader who wished to intellectual equality with the West. A common meeting ground of the best minds of the East and West and education was an expression of his nationalism. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das described him as an abundant designer, whose heart was with the nation. At a very sensitive age on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1876 Asutosh saw the most notable graduates, visitors, syndics, fellows and administrators in a remarkable ceremonial assembly in the new Senate House. And he thought, when he would grow up to be an active member of the notable assembly.

At that time he took the first art Examination, his uncle Radhika Prasad Mukherjee was appointed as a fellow of the Calcutta University. At this period Asutosh's in the affairs of the University began. His uncle sent to him some papers and minutes, he felt attracted and studied with special interest and care. This was the bases of his unique knowledge of university affairs which in course of time became the secret of his supremacy. When Sir Courtney was asked him what could he do for him? Asutosh replied to have an opportunity to serve the University. Sir Ilbert was surprised at the answer. In those days all the members of the Senate were appointed by the government. And Asutosh was chosen as a Fellow of the Senate of the Calcutta University when he was only 25 years old at that time. He was elected to the Syndicate and from that time began his active association with the University till his death.

**2. OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the study are as follow

- To study the contribution of Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya to making the University of Calcutta as renowned.
- To study Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya as a quality administrator.

**3. METHODS OF THE STUDY:**

This study is documentary in nature. Documentary analysis has been done in the study. This present study is based on the secondary sources like Thesis, Journals, Articles, Books and websites etc. the method is used in this study is Analytical Method.

**4. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

Asutosh Mukherjee is a great leader, nationalist and an educationist. He have so many contribution in the development of the Calcutta University and making the University renowned in the world. This study will help those who wish to know about the role and contribution of Sir Asutosh in the development of the Calcutta University and make further work on Asutosh and the Calcutta University.

**5. CONTRIBUTION OF ASUTOSH MUKHOPADHYAYA AS VICE CHANCELLOR AND A GREAT LEADER:**

Sir Asutosh Mukherjee characterised the University of Calcutta on the Bengal legislative council from 1899 to 1903. He was elected to represent the corporation of Calcutta in March 1903. Sir Asutosh was the local member of the University Commission set by Lord Curzon in 1902. He was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council by the none-official members of the Legislative Council of Bengal.

The British Government appointed Asutosh as the VC on 31st March 1906 of Calcutta University as a damage control exercise, when the anti-partition movement was at its peak to restore the faith of the Indians on the Calcutta University. On 10th April, 1904 he also selected for a committee to framing the regulations. In the committee there are some members like Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay was the Vice-Chancellor, G.W. Ruchler was the Chairman, Principal Denison Ross from the Calcutta Madrasa. The other members of the committee was Principal N.N.Ghosh, Principal Wann, Principal Brajendranath Seal of Victoria College. The Vice-Chancellorship of the Calcutta University was an honorary post under the Act of Incorporation and it longed two years at a time. Throughout the first spell of the office he held the Vice-chancellorship of the University from 1906 and 1914. Sir Asutosh selected for the office of the Vice-Chancellor second time from 1921-1923.

After recommending Asutosh for the post of VC, the Home Secretary H. H. Risley wrote, "The appointment of a distinguished Indian (Asutosh) as VC would undoubtedly be popular and would tend in some degree to discourage the idea that the sole purpose of the University act (of 1904) was to tighten official control over the Universities." Lord Minto, the new Viceroy, allowed Asutosh makes several changes for the development of the University. At that time Sir Joseph Bampfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal and Assam, recommended to withdraw affiliation of all the schools and colleges whose students participated in the anti-partition movement. M N Saha was expelled from one of these schools for taking part in the anti-partition movement. Asutosh argued that such a move will be highly counter- productive.

Vice Chancellor Asutosh started transforming Calcutta University from a simple body to conducting examination and awarding degree, a centre of learning and research. One of his major achievement was to assure the Senate and Syndicate to "agreement due recognitions to Indian vernaculars." Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu (and ultimately Sanskrit and Pali) introduced as preferable subjects in the University. 'His noblest achievement, surest of them all, a place for his mother tongue at the Asutosh Museum of Arts at the Calcutta University.

In 1909, Asutosh was honoured with a Companion of the Order of the Star of India (CSI) by British Government. Also he was honoured with knight in 1911 for his excellence contributions to education in India. In 1911, the marvellous man created the Chair of King George V Professor of Mental and Moral Science and invited Sir Brajendranath Seal as its first occupant. Sir B N Seal had applied genetic method in the field of aesthetics and also was an international founder of statistics. In 1921, after moving of Brajendratnath to Mysore University as Vice-chancellor, Asutosh invited Radhakrishnan, as Brajendranath's successor in the same chair who was then in Mysore University.

Sir Asutosh was apprehensive to found a law college in Calcutta like the law colleges in Madras, Bombay and Allahabad. The first step towards the establishment of the college what Sir Asutosh described in his convocation Speech of 1914 as "the new University of Calcutta" was taken when under his leadership the Senate of the University

decided to establish the University Law College. Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya was written a minute for the Syndicate of the University, where he stated: "The branch of our education system which stands in need of the most urgent and radical reform is that concerned with the teaching of law for our degree examinations. This a noteworthy feat that we have not got a single college devoted entirely to the study of law as we have in the cases of Medicine and Engineering". It was to be a model Law College, managed by the Government and was to be constituted as bonafide centre of legal education. The College started functioning from July 1909.

A plot of land was acquired by the University in 1912 for south of the Darbhanga Library Building, at a cost of one lakh rupees from that fifty thousand paid out of its reserve funds. A hostel was built for the Hindu students, total approximate cost of the hostel was four lakhs of rupees. The Government of India contributed three lakhs towards the hostel building. Also an examination hall was built for holding the University examinations. Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya set about the extraordinary task of establishing a teaching University within one year of the assumption of his office as Vice- Chancellor. His countless hard work in this way passed through four stages. In the first stage, he tried to give teaching to M.A. students through University lecturers under the Universities Act of 1904, who were the professors in so many affiliated colleges. With them some were connected readers who were all scholars of both renowned and merit so that interaction with them by innovative students might inspire their own thinking. In the second stage, he attempted to found University Chairs held by notable scholars. In the third stage, regular and whole-time professors, readers and lecturers were appointed. In the fourth stage, after a good deal of thought and disagreement, post-graduate study and research in Calcutta was integrated in the hands of the University, and the post-graduate departments of Arts & Science came into existence. With the wonderful gifts of Rashbehary Ghose and Taraknath Palit, Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya established the University College of Science & Technology.

Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya struggled hard more than five years to begin post graduate teaching and research in the Humanities department. He was dedicated to organising the ground and constituents for post-graduate teaching and research from 1909 to 1914, after that the rest of the period for joining and further improvement of post-graduate research activities. In his convocation address in 1912, Asutosh said: "That in order to bring the post-graduate teaching up to the standards of the best of the western universities, more diversification and specialization in the post-graduate courses was necessary. The lecturers selected for such teaching should be specialists in their particular branches of study, who could give the students the results of the latest study on the subject; these were not to be found in the textbooks but had to be gathered from specialist journals."

The University had no funds to deal with the departments of Science and Technology. Taraknath Palit, a renowned member of the English Bar of Calcutta, assets worth seven lakhs of rupees made over to the University in June 1912. For that the year 1912 is very much significant in the History of the University. The donation was given by him to found was two Professorships in the University, one in Physics and the other is in Chemistry. The great scientist Prafullachandra Roy, was the first occupant of Palit Chair of Chemistry. The University of Calcutta and the people of Bengal and India be indebted of gratitude to him. Another scientist and an eminent member of the Indian Finance Service of the Government of India was the first holder of Palit Chair of Physics.

Sir Asutosh made an opportunity of the teaching activities in Post-Graduate Departments of Science and Arts on 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1913. In these two departments eleven subjects were taught. Those subjects are Pure Mathematics, English, Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, Arabic, Comparative Philology, History, Botany, Mental and Moral Philosophy, and Political Economy. In Pure Mathematics there were 211 students and four lecturers.

Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya placed the foundation stone of the University college of Science on March 1914. He delivered his eighth convocation speech. A message was sent to the Hardinge for the absence of him on the convocation address in course of which he mentioned to the activities of the retiring Vice-Chancellor during the long and unprecedented term of office and stated that "he had made his University his own." On his eighth convocation address Sir Asutosh stressed the story of the development of the post graduate departments of study.

## 6. ROLE OF ASUTOSH AS GREAT ADMINISTRATOR:

Sir Asutosh Mukherjee was a prolific educator who became a member of the Syndicate of the Calcutta University, also a member of Senate. He was elected as President of the Asiatic Society four times, establishing a record in the annals of the society up to his time. Asutosh was the General President of Indian Science Congress. He was appointed as a second Indian Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta in 1906 by Lord Minto. Justice Gooroodass Banerjee become the first Indian Vice Chancellor of the University. When Asutosh was Vice Chancellor of the University, the University was known only for examining body and running like broken leg. It was discriminated by British rules.

Asutosh believed that to free the University and the society from the British discrimination it was highly necessary to spread the light of knowledge from grass root to high level of education. For that purpose he wishes to make the University of Calcutta highly popular and Quality University, which will not be only an examining body but also a centre of innovative, qualitative and highly outcome based teaching-learning and research work. For his prevision guidance the University of Calcutta from a merely examining body to one of the popular, modest, innovative teaching-learning and research University of the whole East.

Asutosh was a good Mathematician as well as an intelligent student of Physics and Law, who brought a diversity of many disciplines of the University by introducing graduate course in many departments like Anthropology, Ancient history and Culture, Islamic Culture, Applied Psychology, Industrial Chemistry, Comparative Literature. Today so many subjects which are offering in the University at post graduate course like Bengali, Sanskrit, Pali and Hindi from the innovative ideas of Asutosh. He also arranged quality research in post graduate departments. Asutosh brought many renowned professors from his wide network of scholars, friends and colleagues to the University from India and abroad, who delivered excellent and quality teaching. He was responsible for opening Bengali Department in post graduate section of the University, in those days which was a difficult thing to achieve.

Asutosh Mukherjee collected a large sum of money aiming to establish buildings for post graduate studies, research in the University both in science and arts, books in the library. The way of establishing buildings and research was not smooth because government was strongly opposed. But he achieved his goal because of the spontaneous financial support from many persons like Tarak Nath Palit, Rash Behari Ghosh etc.

As a great leader and administrator Asutosh created so many professorship post like Palit Professorship in Chemistry, first offered to Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy. Palit Professorship in Physics, first offered to C.V. Raman. Ghosh Professorship was first offered Ganesh Prasad in Mathematics, D.M. Bose in Physics, P.C. Mitter in Chemistry and S.P. Agharkar in Botany.

As a great administrator he established technology departments in the University like The Bengal Technical Institute in 1906, which was renamed as the College of Engineering and Technology in 1928. And The University College of Science in 1914.

## 7. RESULTS:

After commencing the work the researcher found that

- In his leadership the Calcutta University became a great and reputed centre of teaching, leaning and research in India
- Sir Asutosh was founded a law college in Calcutta like the law colleges in Madras, Bombay and Allahabad, where all the branches of law can be taught.
- A library Building which is popularly known as Dwarbhanga Library Building, a Hostel and an Examination Hall was built by him. For that he managed funds from so many sources.
- Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya established the University College of Science & Technology.
- So many new Departments and subjects were opened by him and to teach the subjects he appointed a large number of readers, assistant professors, professors form so many Colleges and Universities.
- Sir Asutosh founded the University College of Science, where more than ten subjects were taught.
- He always tried his best to keep and maintained autonomy of University.

## 8. CONCLUSION:

After four time holding the Vice-Chancellors office, Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyaya retired from the Vice-Chancellorship of Calcutta University. No one served the university for more than two terms like Asutosh as Vice-Chancellorship during the hundred years of Calcutta University exception E. C. Bayley. In 1914, sir Asutosh did not realize that after spending eight year he would be called upon again, to hold and control the office for another term at a time of unparalleled economic and political condition. Sir Asutosh for the first time in his life was elected to the Senate in 1914 by the Registered Graduates community. A marble bust of Sir Asutosh was presented by the Principal professors and students of the University Law College. It was unveiled by Carmichael, the Rector of the University and stands at the head of the steps of the Dwarbhanga Building welcoming scholars of the world, seeking knowledge and truth.

Asutosh changed so many directions of the University integrating teaching and research at the University level for the first time in India. He was mostly popular for pioneer role in broadening the scope of higher education in India as well as in the world. Which he started through the up

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