

**SIR P. S. SIVASWAMY AIYER (1864-1946)**  
**K.C.S.I., C.I.E.,**  
**THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY**



Sir P.S. SIVASWAMI IYER

Sir Sivaswami Iyer was a prominent High Court pleader and a great patron of education. He was appointed Advocate-General for Madras in 1907 and became perhaps the first Indian to occupy that post. Sivaswami Iyer was elected to the senate of the Madras University in 1898 and served as Vice Chancellor of the Madras University from 1916 to 1918. From 13<sup>th</sup> April 1918 to 8<sup>th</sup> May 1919, he served as the Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University. As a Vice-chancellor he outlined lofty ideals for Banaras Hindu University and desired that teaching Engineering, Agriculture and Commerce must commence immediately. For Sir Iyer as a new kind of Industrial production was being inaugurated in European Countries and was likely to impact India, it was the duty of the Hindu University to prepare young men for it by education in those departments for applied scientific knowledge.

the midst of his numerous pressing burdens of State, to grace this occasion by his presence and encourage us in the discharge of the onerous task that lies before us. It is a happy augury for the future of this University that its first Convocation should be presided over by the enlightened ruler of a model Indian State who has ever been anxious to be in the vanguard of progress and whose deep interest in education is evinced, among other things, by the inauguration of a new University in his own State and by the acceptance of the office of Chancellor in the Universities of Mysore and Benares.

The movement in favour of the multiplication of Universities and the formation of Universities of a new type, different from the one already established, is of recent origin in this country as it has been elsewhere. It is partly due to the feeling that the existing Universities are not adequate in number to serve the interests of such a large country as ours and partly due to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing type. Such dissatisfaction does not imply any failure or unwillingness to recognise the good that has been done in the country by the existing Universities. In spite of the changes introduced by the legislation of 1904, the Universities in British India continue to be mainly examining bodies. The federal character of the Universities, the width of their jurisdiction over wide areas and scattered colleges, the absence of concentration in one locality are factors, which among others, stand in the way of the existing Universities ever becoming essentially teaching Universities. The federal type of University is not conducive to the growth of a corporate life among the constituent colleges or to the efficient performance of its true functions by a University. Let me not be understood, however, as suggesting the abolition of federal Universities without anything to replace them. Until the time comes, when most of the important centres of education in the different provinces can have their own unitary Universities, Universities of the affiliating type will unavoidably have to be maintained. Even a federal University, with all its shortcomings, is preferable to having no University. Speaking for myself, it was a wise decision on the part of the Government of India that the Hindu University was not given power to affiliate any institutions outside the city of Benares. Apart from the dissatisfaction caused by the examining type of University, there has been a growing feeling in the country that the existing system of University education has not been sufficiently correlated to the practical needs of fast changing material and economic conditions, and has not been sufficiently alive to the necessity for the preservation of Hindu culture and ancient learning in the forcible impact of

western knowledge and western culture. It was felt that the existing Universities had rightly or wrongly neglected the need for religious instruction, had done little for the enrichment of the vernacular literature and the popularisation of western knowledge and had not sufficiently interested themselves in the promotion of higher technical and vocational education. The objects of the promoters of the Hindu University were intended to be accomplished by the creation of a teaching and residential University, by insistence upon religious instruction to Hindu students and by the entrusting of the management to a non-official body capable of quicker movement in response to public opinion and freed from some of the inevitable restrictions of state activity. The lines on which the Hindu University has been constituted give us an ample measure of freedom to enable us to satisfy all these needs and our achievement will only be limited by the funds we can secure and by the amount of co-operation and steady effort it may be possible for us to enlist in the work of the University.

The Hindu University is not intended to be a reproduction of the type of Indian Universities now in existence, but to conform to the best ideals of University organization, which have been formulated. The Universities of the world have been roughly classified by an American writer according to the main functions fulfilled by them into those which aim at the discovery and advance of truth, those which aim at the development of character, those which aim at the making of gentlemen and the harmonious cultivation of the intellect, the heart, and the aesthetic faculty, and those which aim at efficient training for vocations. It is needless to observe that there is no antagonism between the different aims and there is no reason why they should not all be simultaneously pursued. These various aims will equally be kept in view by this University.

I have heard it said in some quarters that the Hindu University must be of a distinct type different not merely from the Indian Universities but also from the Universities of the west. To a certain extent this must be conceded, in so far as the Hindu University aims, at the preservation of ancient learning and of Hindu culture, in the highest sense of the term, the provision of instruction in the essential principles of the Hindu religion and the investigation of problems peculiar to India and the application of science to Indian conditions. But in other respects, the ideals of the Hindu University must necessarily be the same as those of the best modern Universities of the west. The provision of equipment and facilities for scientific research, the fearless pursuit and discovery of truth and the augmentation of the sum of human knowledge must necessarily be included

among the aims of the best Universities. It has been observed that the tendency of modern Universities is towards specialization in an extremely narrow field and that it is necessary to correct this tendency by greater co-ordination among the subjects of study and by a comprehensive view of the correlations of the different sciences. The need is as much felt and emphasized by thinkers in the west as here. A synthetic view of the field of knowledge and desire to comprehend the scheme of the Universe as a whole are no doubt among the characteristics of Indian culture, but it would be difficult to maintain that they have not been appreciated and emphasized by western thinkers. The organization of Universities and their aims and methods have received close attention in England within the last few years and the defects of existing Universities have been clearly pointed out by competent critics. In India these problems have been engaging the attention of the distinguished men who constitute the Calcutta University Commission. Pending the outcome of the protracted labours of this commission, it might be rash for a layman to venture upon a definition of the ideals and methods of Universities in this country. Problems incidental to the federal type of University as such do not concern us, but we are interested in the other problems connected with the ideals of Universities and the means of realizing them and much light may be expected to be thrown on these topics by the report of the Sadler Commission.

To an audience like the present it would be superfluous to speak on the supreme need for instruction in the essentials of Hindu religion or for reviving and encouraging the study of our sacred literature and its reinterpretation in the light of modern ideas and scientific knowledge. The fear has been expressed in some quarters that the teaching in the Hindu University might treat everything contained in our Puranas with indiscriminating reverence and as entitled to equal weight and that if, for instance, the system of geography or of mythology contained in them were to be taught as a body of facts, it would be rendering itself ridiculous and exercise a mischievous influence. Critics of this sort are unaware that the spirit of rational investigation has always occupied a place in the history of Indian thought and that the principles of interpretation supplied by our Shastras furnish the means for shifting the essentials of religion from the unessential elements. Speaking for myself, I have no apprehension of the Hindu University following any such reactionary course. It is also needless to dilate upon the vital necessity of preserving all that is best in Indian culture. Great service has been rendered to the Hindu community by Sir John Woodroffe by his spirited vindication of the value of Indian culture in his recently published book. It must

be the aim of this University to preserve and promote Indian culture by giving importance to Samskrit learning in the fields of literature philosophy and religion, in the Faculties of Arts, Oriental learning and Theology.

Certain complaints have been made as to the management of the Hindu University and the policy which it has followed. In a speech recently made in the south it was observed by Sir Rabindranath Tagore that even in the Hindu University, he could find very little that could be called really Hindu. What was probably in the mind of our illustrious countryman was that proper provision had not been made for the teaching of religion in the curricula. As already pointed out religious instruction was one of the objects with which this University was founded and it is, therefore, pledged to provide for such instruction. The subject of the proper organisation of religious instruction has been entrusted to a committee of the Faculty of Theology and the preparation of suitable courses is still under consideration. We welcome the criticism as a helpful reminder of our duty in this respect. Complaint has been made in another quarter that the University has not formulated its ideals or the methods to be adopted for their attainment. I have already observed that our ideals cannot well be totally different from those of the modern Universities of the best type. Theoretically it might be desirable for the University to assume for its domain every department of human knowledge. But financial, regional and other practical limitations must stand in the way of any ambitious assumption of an encyclopedic character. The effect of these limitations will be particularly obvious in the departments of applied science. What branches of applied science can be undertaken by the University must depend upon these limitations and upon the urgency of the needs of the country. For years past, the improvement of the economic resources of the country has been occupying the public mind and the conscience of the Government has been recently awakened by the world-war to the necessity of taking steps to promote the industrial development of India and make it as self-contained as possible. His Excellency the Viceroy assured us that it was the intention of the Government to take immediate action upon the report of the Industrial Commission and lay the foundations for a scheme for progressive industrial development. His Excellency pointed out that the need of the hour was the supply of trained Indians capable of carrying out scientific research and of Indians capable of taking part as leaders and not merely as labourers in industrial and commercial enterprise. The dawn of a new era of industrial development is in sight, and it is the duty of the Hindu University to prepare young men for it by education in those departments of

applied scientific knowledge which are likely to be of most use in our present condition. In this view, the most important subjects in which this University should provide teaching are Engineering, Agriculture and Commerce. The question has been engaging the attention of the Council of the University and it has been decided to start a college of mechanical and electrical engineering as being, probably, the most pressing necessity of the day. Yet another reason for giving precedence to the claims of instruction in engineering is the munificent donation during the last year by his Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, to whom the University owes profound gratitude, of a sum of Rs. 5 lacs for capital expenditure and Rs. 24,000 per annum for the maintenance of chairs for mechanical and electrical engineering. We have fortunately been able to secure the services of Mr. C.A. King, Professor of mechanical engineering at Sibpur, as the Principal of our engineering college and the scheme prepared by him provides for instruction in mechanical and electrical engineering up to the highest standard of the English Universities. The total non-recurring expenditure has been estimated at a sum of Rs. 10 lacs and the annual expenditure, after the first period of 5 years at Rs. 1,20,000 per annum the scheme has been referred to a committee for approval and in the meanwhile one of the workshops has been constructed and it is expected that sufficient progress will be made to start teaching in July next. In Agriculture a scheme has been prepared by Dr. Harold Mann of Poona and this has also been referred to a committee for report. His proposals for an Agricultural College and Farm with all their accessories also involve an initial expenditure of about 10 lacs and a gross recurring expenditure of about a lac. These figures may appear high, but they are certainly not extravagant when compared with the sums that have been spent upon the professional colleges maintained by the State. In this connection an observation may be made which is of equal applicability to all other departments of our activity- that our aim should be to afford the very highest standard of education possible and that any stinting of money in securing efficiency of equipment or staff would be a very unwise piece of economy. I have much pleasure in announcing that his Highness the Maharaja of Benares has been graciously pleased to promise to grant a permanent lease of 1,200 acres of land adjoining the University grounds to enable us to carry out our agricultural developments. The University is grateful to his Highness for this further proof of the deep interest taken by him in its well-being. The rough outlines of a college of commerce were kindly furnished to us by one of our well-wishers, but the consideration of this subject has made much less progress than that of the others. Though the college of commerce will not cost anything like the other two

professional colleges we have to be prepared for a fairly considerable recurring expenditure under this head also. It has been suggested by some of our critics that we should chalk out the exact lines of expansion of the University and the order in which the different developments should be undertaken. But it is by no means an easy matter to settle which of the several departments of higher technical education is more important than others. Nor even, if this were feasible, would it be possible to adhere rigidly to any preordained plan. For instance, it would be difficult to decide, whether Mechanical Engineering or Agriculture is more important to the country. For my own part, I might be disposed to attach more importance to Mechanical Engineering in view of our more backward condition in manufacturing industries, but it would be idle to expect unanimity on questions like this, and instead of wasting time over discussion for the purpose of settling the relative claims to priority of these departments, we shall do well to start these developments according to the opportunities, pecuniary support and other facilities available. If persons interested in any special departments of knowledge will put us in possession of funds or help us to secure sufficient funds for opening that department, the management of the University will gratefully welcome their aid and do its best to open such department. Another department which may be appropriately expanded in the Hindu University and to which, I believe, great importance is attached by the public in this Province even more than elsewhere, is Ayurvedic medicine, the study of which may be placed on an improved basis by the creation of a separate college with a hospital attached there to, for the necessary clinical material. What is wanted in my opinion, in this department is not the mere study of the old text-books according to the traditional methods, but a scientific study of the subject along with those auxiliary sciences, which according to modern notions are indispensable to the practice of medicine and in the light of the results of modern knowledge and scientific research. The woeful indifference of our educated men to the fine arts suggests yet another sphere of activity, which the University would be justified in creating if sufficient funds were forthcoming. We could provide for the cultivation of the aesthetic faculty by opening schools for the scientific study of Music (Indian and European), Architecture and Town-planning, painting and sculpture. The development of the University, in all these directions, must necessarily require time and I would request our impatient critics to remember that it is little more than two years since the University Act came into force and that full-blown Universities equipped in all the main departments of human knowledge cannot be brought into existence by merely wishing for them. I yield to none in my eagerness to realise all our ideals

in as short a period as possible, but as practical men we are obliged to recognise the limitations of time, money and effort.

I have so far indicated the main branches of knowledge in which it is desirable that the University should undertake teaching in the near future, but the University will have fulfilled only a part of its purpose however important, if it confines itself to the provision of a sound liberal education for the rank and file of its undergraduates. An equally important, if not higher object, is the promotion of original investigation and research. This can only be accomplished by the provision of sufficient facilities for research to the professorial staff, by the encouragement of post-graduate work by the most brilliant students in seminars and laboratories in intimate association with and under the living inspiration of professors who are themselves engaged in original work and by the establishment of residential fellowships in the sciences and humanities including orientalia and of foreign scholarships for research. The importance of this subject has not been overlooked by the Council. A committee has been appointed to consider the matter and though the committee has not yet been able to make its report, it is hoped that it may be possible to formulate a scheme during this session and to carry it out as soon as necessary funds can be made available. Even if it be not possible to secure permanent endowments for such fellowships, it would be necessary to establish them for a period of 10 or 15 years at least; so that we may be able to produce a band of investigators imbued with a love of research and willing to devote their lives to the work of teaching and research. Even from the pecuniary point of view, expenditure on such fellowships would be profitable to the University since it may be possible to enter into engagements with the holders of these fellowships and scholarships that they should, when fully qualified and if so desired by the University, take part in the work of teaching on a modest scale of remuneration similar to that which obtains in most other countries in the world. It is only by collecting such a group of research workers that we should be able to create a suitable academic atmosphere favourable to the quest of truth and the advancement of knowledge.

The popularisation of western knowledge by translations and by original works and the adoption in a growing measure of the vernacular as the vehicle of instruction have undoubtedly to be included among the ideals of the Hindu University, but it is one of those ideals which require time for realization and while I would deprecate any precipitancy in this direction, I do not think it necessary to put off all attempts till suitable text-books in the vernacular come into

existence. The assumption that it is necessary to coin equivalent words in the vernacular for all scientific and technical terms is dictated by a false patriotism and a spirit of literary Puritanism. The tendency throughout the civilized world is to adopt as far possible the same scientific vocabulary so as to facilitate the international exchange of scientific ideas. The realm of scientific knowledge recognises no exclusive distinctions of race, nationality or country.

I shall now pass on to one or two questions of University reform, which have engaged the anxious attention of all who have devoted any thought to the improvement of our Universities. I wish first to refer to the imperative need for mitigating the baneful effects on education of the system of examinations. Even in the old teaching Universities of England it has been felt that examinations occupy an undue share of the attention of the students and are inimical to the best interests of education. The conclusions arrived at by the Haldane Commission on University Education in London was that examinations were an insufficient and inconclusive test of a real University education, that due weight should be given to the whole record of the students' work in the University and that if scope for individual initiative was to be allowed to the professors and the students were to fully profit by their instruction, it was necessary that subject to the proper safeguards, the degrees of the University should practically be the certificates given by the professors themselves. Any one with a knowledge of the state of things in this country will readily admit that examinations have become the end of student life and have had a disastrous effect upon the whole system of education. In the case of a unitary University like ours managed by a non-official body and labouring under no necessity of maintaining a uniformity of standard by a system of external examinations, it should be possible to check the evil either by abolishing examinations or by reducing their importance as a qualification for degrees. There may, however, be more difficulty in eradicating the evil than may appear at first sight. The fact that the examination system will continue to flourish in some form or another and be accepted as furnishing a hall mark for the issue of degrees in the adjoining state Universities, the unfortunate tendency of large numbers of graduates to seek employment under the Government and the jealous suspicion with which the Government is likely to regard degrees issued upon a system of no public examinations as a form of debased coinage and the deep-rooted desire on the part of the parents of students for the attainment of distinction by their sons in the examination races are some of the factors with which our university will have to reckon in introducing an urgently needed and most

wholesome reform. It is also necessary to bear in mind that it will take some time after the University is fully organised for the professorial staff to acquire the confidence of the public in their impartiality and standard of judgment. In the meanwhile it is to be hoped that the maintenance of a preponderance of internal examiners may be the means of providing a fairer test of education. It may be mentioned in passing, that in Japan, to whose example our countrymen are often disposed to appeal, the examinations in the Universities are frequently oral and not written and that marks are neither published nor classified in any way.

Yet another defect in the existing system which obtains in much more intensified form in this country than in England is the unfitness of a large majority of the students at the school-leaving or matriculation stage to enter upon a University course. The remedy, in my opinion, is not to extend the school course and impose upon students an additional year of instruction under more or less the same class of teachers under whom they are educated up to the sixth form, but to treat the intermediate examination as the stage at which real University education should begin and to extend the course for the B.A. examination for pass and honours alike to be a period of three years, the abler students alone being allowed to take the honours course and the rest being allowed to take the pass course. Our University will not have fulfilled its purpose, if it retains the defects of the existing Universities and makes no attempt to follow a policy more in keeping with the trend of the best educational opinion.

The great war which has ended in a glorious victory for the empire and its allies has been full of lessons to the nations of the world. It has brought home to us in a most vivid manner the economic helplessness of the country, the need for making the country more self-reliant and more independent of supplies from other countries and the need for training our countrymen to take their proper place in the economic development of the country. It has also burnt into our minds our utter want of military training and our unfitness to take our proper place in the defence of the country and the empire in the same manner in which European peoples have been able to come forward. I do not, for a moment, wish to under-rate the service actually rendered by India to the Empire during the war; but we cannot help feeling that if India had been properly trained to arms, she could have thrown her weight into the scale on behalf of the Empire with at least the same decisive weight with which America threw herself into the war. To the nations of the west, the war has brought home the importance of respect for the rights of all nations, small or large, the absurdity of seeking to impose by force the culture of

one nation upon others and the moral degradation to which aggressive nationalism and the hunger for territorial and commercial expansion will lead a nation. The principle of 'live and let live,' which has had to be reinforced in the west by the lessons of this dreadful war, has always been one of the basic ideals of Hindu culture. It is no longer possible for us to stay where we are. The improvement in the means of communication which has brought together all parts of the world has rendered every country sensible to the shocks of political and economic disturbances in other parts of the world, and our position as members of a world-wide empire has rendered us especially sensitive. Whether we wish it or not, we cannot help being sucked into the whirlpool of international economic competition, which, it is too much to hope, can possibly be terminated by any League of Nations. If our country is to survive the struggle and acquire the same vitality as other nations, it can only be by the assimilations of the scientific knowledge and culture of the west. Our adaptation to changed conditions can only be brought about by a combination of Indian and European culture and not by the sacrifice of the former or by the slavish absorption of the latter. The problems of reconstruction which India will also have to face can only be successfully solved by a sound system of education, physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual, by the application of scientific knowledge to the practical needs of life and by the cultivation of a spirit of enlightened patriotism and self-sacrifice and of a love of order and freedom. In the accomplishment of this task the Universities in India have a most important part to fulfill. It is the privilege of the Hindu University that its promoters have been the first to realize the importance and necessity of combining Indian and European culture. Other Universities may, and let us hope, will, adopt the same ideal, but none can vie with the University in the advantage of its situation in the sacred city, which for ages past has been the centre of Hindu learning and Hindu culture and has possessed a unique hold upon the imagination, affections and religious instincts of the people. The history of this city may be traced back to the date of the Upanishads, to a probable antiquity of at least three thousand years. Here came Gârgya Bâlâki, filled with conceit of learning, eager to proclaim his knowledge in the court of King Ajâtsatru of Kâshi, whom he challenged to a discussion of the highest verities. Vanquished in the debate, he had to beg leave of the wise king to become his pupil and acquire knowledge of the Brahman. Hither did the Lord Buddha direct his wandering steps and here did he stay for years to preach his new message to mankind. Hither came also the great Sankaracharya, the founder of the Advaita Philosophy, to preach his doctrines and convert his opponents. Through centuries of political disturbance

and against the onslaught of rival faiths, Kashi has ever maintained its position as the citadel of the Hindu faith and handed on without quenching the torch of Hindu learning and Hindu culture. Where is the city in India, which can claim the same rich association with Hindu faith and culture for so long a period, and is so eminently fitted to attract the Hindu world? Is it a visionary ideal to cherish that, when our University is fully developed, it will become a shrine of learning, both Oriental and western, to which students from all parts of the Hindu world will be attracted for the purpose of education in the same way as the Ganges attracts pilgrims from all over India? The removal of ignorance and the spread of knowledge in things moral and spiritual is the motto of this University. Salvation by faith and by knowledge has been and will continue to be the function of Kashi. The sacred river traversing the whole width of the continent, gathering in itself the waters of mighty confluent streams and spreading fertility and wealth over vast areas by numberless branches, shall be an emblem of the part which this University is destined to play in the spread of learning, culture and spirituality. Nor will the Indian renaissance be confined in its effects to this country alone. Our turn will come to enrich the culture of the west with our spiritual culture: in the eloquent words of Professor Geddes, western glories ever rekindle in the east and eastern dawn travels surely towards the west.

Graduates of the year, in the name of the University, I congratulate you on the degrees you have attained as the reward of your ability, industry and devotion to learning. The solemn exhortation which in the days of the Upanishads, the Guru addressed to his disciples on the completion of their course of studies and which has been recited today must be still ringing in your ears. No words of mine can add to the impressiveness of the sacred text. Ever bear in mind in your career through life the solemn injunction never to swerve from the truth and never to swerve from the path of Dharma, a word which, in itself embraces the law and the prophets and sums up the whole of morality. If your western learning has inspired you with a love of freedom and of personal rights, the precepts of your religion place before you in the fore-front of your ideas the conception of duty to all your fellow-beings. No religion has set loftier ideals. To obtain a mastery of our lower selves and to follow the path of duty without any fear of personal consequences of desire for reward has been the injunction of our religion. You will have to play an important part in the regeneration of India and the making of her future so as to enable her to take an honoured place in the league of nations. Whether the victorious termination of the great war will be a permanent harbinger of peace to

the world, or whether it is only the fall of the curtain upon the first act of the drama and the disruptive forces which have been set loose in parts of Europe will spread to other countries of the world and will lead to a more terrific conflagration by setting the members of every nation at war with each other, is still in the womb of the future. Whatever the course of events and in whatever condition you may be placed, always enlist yourselves on the side of order and justice, humanity and freedom. Remember that you are graduates of the University of Kashi, a city whose intellectual and spiritual renown is more ancient than that of any European city, but never boast of your heritage of culture or spirituality. Your culture and your spirituality must run with the blood in your veins and form part of the texture of your souls. Remember also that not merely will you be judged by your conduct but the University also will be judged by her offspring and bear yourselves so that you bring luster to your *Alma mater* and enable her, as far as in you lies, to claim a place among the best Universities of the world.

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