

The first ever demand for higher education in Madras Presidency was voiced forth in a Public Address to The Right Honourable Lord John Elphinstone G.C.H., Governor of Madras signed by 70,000 Native Inhabitants when the Governor in Council was contemplating "some effective and liberal measures for the establishment of an improved system of national education". This public petition which was presented by the then Advocate General Mr. George Norton on 11.11.1839 pressed the need for an English College in the Madras city. Pursuant to this, Lord Elphinstone evolved a plan for the establishment of a Central Collegiate Institution or a "University?". This University had twin Departments (1) High School for the cultivation of English literature, regional language, philosophy and science, (2) College providing instruction in the higher branches of literature, philosophy and science.

The University Board was constituted in January 1840 with Mr. George Norton as its President. This was the precursor of the present Presidency College, Chennai. However, a systematic educational policy for India was formulated only after 14 years by the historic dispatch of 1854 (Sir Charles Wood's Education Dispatch), which pointed out the rationale for "creating a properly articulated system of education from the primary school to the University". The Dispatch recommended the establishment in the Universities of Professorships "for the purposes of the delivery of lectures in various branches of learning including vernacular as well as classical languages". As a sequel, the University of Madras, organized on the model of London University, was incorporated on 5 September 1857 by an Act of the Legislative Council of India.

The University of Madras progressed and expanded throughout the nineteenth century to span the whole of South India and subsequently gave birth to and nourished most of the Universities viz., Mysore University (1916), Osmania University (1918), Andhra University (1926), Annamalai University (1929), Travancore University (1937) presently Kerala University, Sri Venkateswara University (1954), Madurai Kamaraj University (1966), Bharathidasan University (1982), Bharathiar University (1982), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (1971), Anna University (1978), Tamil University (1981), Mother Teresa University (1984), Tamil Nadu Dr.M.G.R.Medical University (1989), Tamil Nadu Veterinary Sciences University (1990), Periyar University (1997) and the Tamil Nadu Dr.Ambedkar Law University (1997). The National Assessment and Accreditation Council has conferred the "Five star Status" to the University of Madras. The University of Madras has been given the status of "University with Potential for Excellence" by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The description of the Coat of Arms of the University of Madras as designed in 1857 and now being followed is as follows:

"Argent on a Mount issuant from the basement a Tiger passant proper, on a Chief Sable, a Pale Or, thereon, between two Elephants heads coupé of the field, a lotus flower leaved and slipped of the third, together with this motto Doctrina Vim Promovet Insitam".

The coat of arms are shown in the following tints.

green

white ground

grey on black ground

white flower, olive green leaves, on gold ground

Motto Scroll - edger red, black lettering

the base Vert? - a light

Tiger - yellow on

Elephants -

Lotus -

The English translation of the motto of the University of Madras is: "Learning promotes (one's) natural (innate) talent."

In 1912 endowments were made to the University to establish departments of Indian History, Archaeology, Comparative Philology and Indian Economics. In all there were 17 University departments, 30 University teachers, 69 research scholars and 127 University publications in that year and the budget was for Rs.11 lakhs. Later, the research and teaching functions of the University were encouraged by Sadler Commission and the gains of the University were consolidated by the enactment of Madras University Act of 1923. About this time, the territorial ambit of the Madras University encompassed from Berhampur of Orissa in the North, Trivandrum of Kerala in the South West, Bangalore and Mangalore of Karnataka in the West and Hyderabad of Andhra Pradesh in the North.

However, Indian independence in 1947, the setting up of the University Grants Commission in 1956 and changes in political, social and cultural milieu had brought several amendments to the University of Madras Act of 1923 to permit qualitative and quantitative changes in its jurisdictions and functions. The policy strands as they have emerged since then and being operated as follows:

Keep furtherance of knowledge in the various disciplines and subjects as its primary goal. In the search for new knowledge, encourage and support continuously (a) socially relevant education (b) improvement of the quality of education and (c) an equitable access to all sections of the society to higher education.

Provide leadership in higher education to its affiliated colleges and encourage, support and wherever necessary, regulate them to adhere to established norms in conducting courses of study as well as other related matters. Take holistic decisions and actions by bearing in mind its primary goal and remain accountable to the students, teachers, employees, funding agencies the society as a whole and the Government and be dictated by a democratic process moderated by rectitude. Be responsive to the changes in the frontiers of knowledge, nationally and internationally.

Status of the University : STATE UNIVERSITY

Type of University : AFFILIATING