



GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION

Address by  
Professor S. Nurul Hasan  
C h a n c e l l o r

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Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished scholars, learned teachers, graduates of the year, ladies and gentlemen :

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome in these sylvan surroundings some of our most distinguished scholars to North Bengal University. We are grateful to them for having agreed to join our fraternity and become members of the University. We shall always remain proud of the fact that scholars who have achieved such distinction are now among our alumni. I am particularly obliged to Professor S. K. Joshi, Director, National Physical Laboratory, for having taken the trouble to address this Convocation. Professor Joshi has not only expanded the frontiers of our knowledge by his personal contributions but he presides over an Institution which is a source of pride to our country. His coming here will, I have no doubt, inspire the teachers and students of this University to serve the cause of knowledge with greater devotion:

2. I was gratified to hear the address of the Vice Chancellor and to know about the continuous progress that this University has made. I am conscious of the difficulties



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and problems that are being faced by the University community but I do hope that with generous support from the State Government and the University Grants Commission at least some of the problems would be solved. I can, however, assure the members of the University community that they would have received far greater financial support but for the constraint of resources.

3. Our country is passing through a critical period so far as its economy is concerned. We have had a bumper harvest and there is no reason why our production should not go up rapidly. But, certain internal and external factors have created such pressures on prices and on the balance of payment that the situation has become gloomy.

4. I am convinced that the country has the inherent strength to overcome any economic difficulty but the challenges, which face us today, are not merely economic. It seems that the country itself is on trial. Our very existence as a nation is being challenged. Communal tensions, castes strifes, linguistic chauvinism and regional pressures are threatening the very fabric of our nationhood. I have



no doubt that the determined effort of our people will enable the country to successfully overcome such grave challenges.

5. I need hardly mention to this learned body that nations, in the sense we understand them today, were evolved during and after the middle of the 19th Century. In 1815, for example, when the leaders of the European States assembled at Vienna to redraw the map of Europe after the Napoleonic wars, the determining concept was not 'nationhood' but 'legitimacy of the rights of the Rulers'. Even as late as 1863-64, while the process of German Unification was going on, the famous British Prime Minister, Palmerston, who had for long been its Foreign Secretary, spoke of the Schleswig-Holstein question not on the basis of nationality but of rights of rulers and he made the famous remark that only three persons had understood the problems of legitimacy of the rulership of the two duchies - one was Prince Albert who was dead, the other was a Dutch lawyer who had gone mad, and the third was himself who had completely forgotten it. Alsace and Lorraine which had been a part of the French Empire, were annexed by



Bismarck to Germany exercising the right of conquest. The point, I am seeking to make, is that historically the concept of nationhood was being evolved even in Europe in the 19th Century.

6. Towards the end of the 19th Century this concept began to be evolved in our country too. The credit for initiating this move goes to the first leaders of India's national struggle. Gradually we committed our people to the urgent need of welding the scattered parts of India into a single unified nation and making it free from the clutches of the Imperialists who were determined to keep our country fragmented.

7. The sacrifices of our people and the wise leadership provided by some of the greatest sons and daughters of India enabled us not <sup>only</sup> to become free and to <sup>give unto ourselves</sup> a Constitution that would weld our people in a unified Nation State. We give unto ourselves the concept of a Union of States. The law makers of independent India ensured that all citizens shall enjoy equality before the law and equal protection of its laws. The Constitution also ensured that the State



shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sect, place of birth or any of them. The Constitution also gave equality of opportunity to every citizen in matters relating to employment or appointment under the State.

8. Apart from these guarantees the Constitution has ensured for all sections of its citizens the freedom of religion, cultural freedom, and has recognised the legitimate cultural rights of all sections of the population.

9. Thus, with the promulgation of our Constitution the Indian nation which unfortunately was partitioned at the time of freedom was nevertheless able to emerge as a modern secular State in which all sections of its citizens will have equal opportunity.

10. The promulgation of such an enlightened and progressive Constitution gave us hopes that the country would now move forward economically, socially and politically.

11. But unfortunately, fissiparous tendencies have raised their ugly head and the remarkable achievements



of nation-building are being threatened. On the very eve of independence, in 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru had said, and I quote, The country is passing through a period of transition, and there is some confusion during this period and several evil forces have manifested themselves. As an instance, see the communal disturbances in the country which have deeply pained me. Unquote.

12. But Jawaharlal Nehru was full of hope regarding the future of India. This hope arose because of his faith in the youth. It is, therefore, for the new generation of India, especially those who are fortunate enough to receive University education to ponder over the dangers facing the country and raise their voice determinedly against divisive forces. At a time, when well-developed nations of Western Europe are seeking to strengthen their polity, economy and society by coming closer to each other we are threatened by divisive forces.

13. Soon after the dawn of freedom, addressing the University community at Allahabad, Jawaharlal Nehru had



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said that a University stood for humanism and that if Universities perform their duties properly all would be well in the country. These prophetic words have become truer today and the newer generations of the University graduates have to face greater challenges than what we had to do. I have no doubt that you will succeed and that India would march out of this fire stronger and healthier and more determined to change the quality of life of our people.

14. To those who have received the degrees and diplomas, medals and honours, I offer my blessings and hearty congratulations. I do hope and trust that they will bring glory to their alma mater and strength to the nation.

JAI HIND.