

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Thirteenth Annual Convocation

Address

by

Shri T.N.Singh, Governor of West Bengal
& Chancellor, University of North Bengal

18th March 1979

Raja Ramohunpur

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dastur, Members of the University Council, young friends, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to be here to-day at the 13th Annual Convocation of the University of North Bengal. I am particularly happy that Prof. (Miss) Dastur is with us this morning. Her eminence as a scholar in the field of Political Science and the record of her selfless public service are known to all and worthy of emulation. I am sure the message she has conveyed in her address will be taken to heart not only by the young graduates but the younger generation as a whole.

The foundation of this University is primarily due to the imagination of one of the greatest and illustrious sons of Bengal, Dr. B.C.Roy. He thought, and rightly so, that in this region which has not had the benefit of education in the proper sense of the term and which has been always considered backward, did deserve a University of its own. The Calcutta University had become too big to cover the entire State of West Bengal and therefore it became necessary that in this backward region a University with proper traditions and necessary facilities for higher education should be founded. And that great son of West Bengal not only realised the need of such an institution in this area but he had the drive and initiative to give it a practical shape. But for the drive, indomitable will, initiative and capacity for hard work at an advanced age of Dr. B.C.Roy, this University would not have been what it is today. The students and the people of this area should pay their homage to the vision and forethought of Dr. B.C.Roy. I will be failing in my duty if I do not state here that this University owes a lot to its first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Benoy Das Gupta.

Because of its.....

Because of its peculiar situation there live in this part of our State a very varied population - people belonging to the hilly areas, people belonging to the Terais and people who have lived in the plains for generations and have imbibed the culture and the traditions developed over generations in the region called South Bengal. Yet this University has I believe, developed new traditions, new atmosphere and climate for education. It is for the teachers, the Vice-Chancellor and the students to build up this University which should be unique and different from the general run of Universities. Then alone would the visions of the late Dr. B.C.Roy be fulfilled. It would be a pity if this institution goes the way of other similar institutions. In the natural rugged surroundings in which this University has been situated it is essential that we should develop our own traditions, a certain ruggedness and chart out a new and difficult path of our own. The reason why I am envisaging such a course for this University is that as events are taking shape today I feel we as a nation are becoming soft. West Bengal, it is reported, does today what the rest of India will do tomorrow. Therefore, I say that this one of the youngest Universities of India, nurtured on the foothills of rugged Himalayas will be somewhat distinctive. I am sure the teachers, the Vice-Chancellor as well as the students of this University will endeavour to set new traditions, break new grounds so that this University should come to occupy in times to come a unique position of its own and recapture the glory of a rugged hard working generation of youngmen brought up in the Himalayan cradle.

Our present system of education has come in for a lot of criticism. We have had many Inquiry Commissions, Committees and such other bodies who have gone into the entire problem of revamping the educational system in India. As long ago as the early

decades of this.

decades of this century, our great leaders like Sri Arabinde Ghosh and Mahatma Gandhi thought of a system of national education because they felt that the education then given was foreign in texture and needed to be changed so that it may produce patriots and dedicated youngmen, dedicated to restore eternal values of our national life and make this nation economically and politically great. The Universities of those days and the educational institutions founded by the British were generally meant to create clerks, pen-pushers or at best brown bureaucrats to perpetuate the British rule. Now we require young men who will not only run a national administration to make India great but who will also take on the responsibility to build a new India, an India of which our great leaders had great visions and who dreamt that it will one day be, as in the hoary past, the leader of civilization in the world. Therefore the students and those in charge of this University have a special responsibility to discharge. If this University nurtured on the foothill of the Himalayas which has inspired generations of our people cannot set a new example and show a new way we shall certainly have failed in realising the dreams which motivated Dr. B.C.Roy to found this institution.

A lot is being said and discussed about the state of affairs in our Universities. Recently at the Governors' Conference a great deal of criticism was made about the state of affairs in our Universities. There was also criticism of indiscipline in University campus. People complained of rowdyism, of indiscipline, of violence and of a general desire on the part of students to get their degrees somehow, whether their means were foul and fair. This is a distressing situation. I cannot say that all the criticisms that have been levelled against our Universities and against our student community are totally correct but all the same the fact remains

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that the state of affairs in our Universities and the climate in our campuses cannot be described as satisfactory. A great deal of change is required, and, therefore, we have to reform the entire educational system. The educational system has not only to be purposeful and create great men in our country, it has also to enable our young men by the right type of education to enable them to play their rightful role in society when they enter life. They should not be mere pen-pushers and seekers after white collared jobs. Many of our students who are today getting degrees will soon be called upon to shoulder responsibilities of various kinds as soon as they passed through the portals of this University. The problems that they have to face today seem almost insurmountable. Probably the country is unable to provide opportunities for the unfoldment of the capabilities of our young men. Probably we have not been able to show enough forethought to build up a society which would provide adequate opportunities to our young men. However that be our resourceful young men coming out of the Universities have, to carve out more and more opportunities of self-employment instead of running after white-collared jobs. The State has its share of responsibility in this regard and I am sure people in position of responsibility are giving their urgent attention to this aspect of the problem. All the same the necessary capabilities which a University has to inculcate among the students have to be provided for. The students who come out of our Universities are generally unemployable. The problem is not that we have a growing number of unemployed persons, though it appears so. The real problem is that our present educational system is responsible for creating increasingly large number of unemployables. The entire system needs a radical change. But it is not so easy as we are not writing on a clean slate. However one thing which appears to me to be very necessary is the creation of a mentality, a psychology among our students not to shun or downgrade manual work.

We should

We should inculcate in them a sense of dignity of labour. It is this spirit which both Shri Aurobindo Ghosh and Mahatma Gandhi wanted to infuse in our students. Unless our students despite their high academic career, qualifications and distinction take to some kind of manual labour as a normal part of their life, the India of Aurobindo's and Gandhiji's dreams will not materialise. Aurobindo founded a technical college at Jadavpur and Mahatma Gandhi talked of the Charkha. Their object was to develop a sense of respect for manual work and wean people away from the craze for white collared jobs. It should not be considered to be below the dignity of an educated person to do some manual work. White collared jobs should yield place to work of a kind where even physical labour is involved. That is the only way when we can have a large number of people becoming self-employed. No amount of new big factories costing crores and crores of rupees can provide jobs to millions of our students who are daily coming out of our Universities. What is needed is that the young men should have the capacity to find jobs for themselves through the process of self-employment. For that I do admit we have to create the necessary infra-structure, the necessary facilities, financial, technical and others that is the task to which the Government must apply its mind. I am sure we are all seriously thinking about this problem and the day is not far off when the students who come out of our Universities will not go hunting for white-collared jobs through employment exchanges or seek the support of some big wig, in political or social life for desk jobs but will create jobs for themselves through self-employment. For this a new self-employment strategy has yet to be worked out. It requires a great deal of thinking by those in authority as to how to devise the mechanism of what is called self-employment opportunities. It is not possible for me to spell out this very important concept in the time at my disposal. But I do feel that it should be possible for the State to provide the

necessary infra-structure,.....

necessary infra-structure, the climate of the necessary skills and technical knowledge to enable our young men to seize opportunities for self-employment. For this the State as well as experienced and dedicated industrialists will have to take care of the organisational aspects. Small mechanised industries will have to be set up by our educated young men in their homes and cottages where they can produce goods which will be either end products or intermediates, the latter to be a part of a big organised industry. The market for exportable goods is unlimited. There is ample scope for internal consumption and exports of such goods provided people with imagination and enterprise can take charge of the organisational aspect. Necessary organisational set up may be given shape by the Government or the leaders of society. I am sure our young and intelligent boys and girls who are second to none in the world would be able to make the best use of such employment opportunities if created by Government and that the necessary infra-structure, finance, credit facilities, technical skills will be made available to them. Then we urgently need to bring about a real extensive agricultural revolution including horticulture and animal husbandry. Our educated young men can take the initiative in this matter. This will require lot of incentive and capacity to rough it out. I hope they would be able to do so. Thus there need be no room for pessimism for the future of our young men and women.