

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Address

H. E. Shri B. D. Pande
Governor, West Bengal
and
Chancellor,
North Bengal University

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR
6TH APRIL, 1982

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rao, ladies and gentlemen, and students,

It is always a privilege to be in the midst of distinguished educationists, teachers and students specially on a solemn, yet joyous occasion like the Convocation. On your behalf and on mine I would like to thank Prof. B. Rama Chandra Rao, a renowned educationist for accepting the invitation to be the Chief Guest for today's function. His address will not only benefit the University but has been of interest to all who are present here.

Your University is situated at the foot-hills of the great Himalayan range. From the most ancient times to the modern, it has been a source of inspiration to our thinkers and poets. It has attracted the most adventurous people from all parts of the world. Swami Vivekananda described it as "Father of Mountains where Rishis lived, where philosophy was born." You are fortunate to be studying in these beautiful surroundings which are picturesque and ever-green. Such surroundings have an unconscious but beneficial effect on the development of one's personality.

In spite of rapid growth and developments in different fields, we are facing considerable tension, want and exploitation in society. All these are disturbing to human relationship. Some of these are the inevitable consequence of change in the political, economic and social spheres. It is therefore necessary that the existing value systems be changed and adjusted to the new requirements. Only thus can the gap between material development and intellectual development be reduced for the growth of a balanced personality and in the interest of all. According to the Sixth Five Year Plan document—"Education, broadly perceived as a seamless continuum of life-long learning, is essential for human resource development at every age level. In a package of develop-

mental inputs available to the community, education should form an effective means to improve the status and character of living patterns of the people, help intellectual, social and emotional development of the individuals and enable them to meet their basic needs of daily life."

The Vice-Chancellor has already indicated the activities and developments of your University. Like everyone else, the University is also facing financial constraints. There are likely to be many other problems. Our Government is also in a difficult financial position. Despite this, however, it is extending the maximum possible financial assistance to this University. Recently some additional funds have been released for various purposes. At the same time, there is need for considerable financial discipline so as to get maximum benefits out of the limited resources. Therefore, I would appeal that all efforts be made to avoid wasteful expenditure and make the best use of the existing funds.

This University which is required to meet the needs of higher education of the students and scholars of the districts of North Bengal and Sikkim has a unique contribution to make. The University, besides imparting higher education in the usual subjects, may also carefully examine whether it can introduce a course of interdisciplinary studies for the socio-economic development of North Bengal plains districts. The Planning Commission has already entrusted this University with funds to make a special study of the hill regions of Darjeeling and of Sikkim. Such a study is of paramount importance if we are to preserve the ecology and special life styles of these hill regions. Being situated at the foothills of the Himalayas, the University can also make a study in depth of the special problems and customs of the hill tribes as well as of the people of Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri districts. There is very great scope to study the folk songs, folk stories, folk poems of these areas. Students studying in this University, who are mainly inhabitants of the neighbouring districts and Sikkim should be made aware of the sociological and anthropological background of the people in these areas.

Education does not mean only imparting of information but concerns the whole person. It is necessary that in this process of education, not only has the student's intellect to be stimulated, but his feelings have to be respected, his body nurtured and his will to learn strengthened. This throws a great task on the teachers. The knowledge and learning that is imparted has to be for the benefit of the student as well as society as a whole. The educational system has to be designed in accordance with the requirements of a country and it must have a relevance not only to the existing situation but of the future. The endeavour has also to be to prevent wastage of national resources and check furtherance of educated unemployment on a large scale.

Since independence there has been a phenomenal growth in the field of higher education. Many defects and shortcomings have also come to notice which have been commented upon by various commissions and other agencies. Education should not be only for acquiring degrees and diplomas but it should be relevant to the requirements and needs of the society and individual as well. More attention needs to be paid to the middle or higher school level so that students are encouraged to go in for such courses which will enable them to establish and obtain self-employment as far as possible. Proper courses of study for this purpose have to be designed.

The total development of the country is dependent upon planned growth of both urban and rural areas. Each requires equal attention. But their needs are different. In our country there has been a disparity in growth between the rural and urban areas and their people. Can this University, in the midst of a large rural hinterland, make special studies and suggest methodologies which can make for rapid advancement of the rural areas and provide opportunities of gainful employment to the educated? I confess I have no answer, but an active involvement of the teachers and students together may help in finding an answer.

There is a tendency among some of the academic community

to remain in seclusion. The general thinking today is that Universities should be a part and parcel of the society around them and its members should identify themselves with its dreams and aspirations. A methodology for such a contact and integration has to be developed.

During the last thirty years we have seen great changes in all spheres of life—political, social, scientific, economic, cultural and so on, some of which could not even be foreseen beforehand. Much more rapid and extensive changes are also likely to occur in the next twentyfive years. It is necessary that the young are prepared to meet the challenges of the future. The syllabus and the academic curriculum have to be so prepared as to suit the changing conditions.

Many of you will be leaving the University shortly and enter into a new world where you will come across many challenges in life. I am sure, you will face them boldly and with a smile and overcome them. I congratulate the recipients of the degrees and diplomas today and I wish all of them a bright future.

Thank you.

JAI HIND.