

Eighteenth Convocation held on December 4, 1984

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Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty of the University, the Alumni- Past and Present, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I deem it a great honour to be here to-day to address you on this special occasion and take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Professor D.B. Dutta, Vice-Chancellor, for his very kind invitation.

Before proceeding to the delivery of my address I would like to convey my congratulations to the students for their achievements and I wish them all success in their future career. We have great hopes in the younger generation and firmly believe that they will work to build up a better India, upholding her cultural heritage and inspiring the spirit of universal brotherhood in order to bring peace, amity and harmony in the world.

We are all aware that our country is passing through a critical juncture and our social and national integration is under constant threat. To avoid this danger our people should be re-educated and should be made to understand the basic values of human life. Not only should they realise these values but they must also practice these ideals to achieve the national goal. That is why there is necessity for the continuous appraisal of the education system to make it functional and in keeping with the ever changing and ever growing needs and demands. The Education Commission (1964-66) appointed by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Professor D.S. Kothari rightly pointed out "In a rapidly changing world of to-day, one thing is certain-yesterday's educational system will not meet to-day's and even so, the need of to-morrow."

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Education, undoubtedly is the most powerful medium through which national development can be achieved. It is universally admitted that no investment is likely to yield greater return than investment in human resources of which the most important component is education. The nature and content of education at different stages, the methodology of instruction, pedagogical practices, infrastructural facilities for education, reforms in systems of evaluation and testing, language teaching and instructional media, development of research and higher education capabilities are some of the major qualitative aspects of education. Since it is not possible to cover all the points I would rather prefer to present before this august audience "Strategies and Problems of Education system in the Pre- Independence and the Post-Independence Period". In the pre-independence period in India the beginning of the state system of education may be traced back to the year 1813 when the East India Company was compelled by the force of circumstances to accept the responsibility for the education of the Indians. Lord T.B. Macaulay, a Law Member of the Governor General's Executive Council, was appointed to frame the policy of education for the Indians. Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor General, accepted this policy which gave emphasis on promotion of western science and arts, the medium of instruction being English. The underlying motive was to give a death blow to the national character and cultural heritage of India. This policy was decried by the Indian intellectuals and was subsequently revised by Sir Charles Wood in 1854. As a result of Wood's despatch Indian Universities were established in 1857 by different acts at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras on the pattern of London University. In 1869 the Lahore University (now in Pakistan) was established. At that time the education was restricted to boys only. It was only in 1877 that the University of Calcutta threw the Matriculation examination open to girls. This was followed by Madras in 1881 and by Bombay in 1883. The Indian Universities Act was passed on March 21, 1904, in the Imperial Legislative Council when Lord Curzon was the Governor General. The most interesting feature was the active expansion of

primary and secondary education receiving the top priority in his programme of educational reforms for the university education. Even this reform was found to be detrimental to the development of Indian culture. To counteract this policy the "Swadeshi Movement" was started and a demand for "Swadeshi Education" soon began to be put forward. The agitation by the then Indian intellectuals culminated in establishing the National Council of Education in March 1906 under Act XXXI of 1860 and subsequently registered in June 1906. The movement for the National Council of Education was not confined to Bengal alone. It spread to other parts of India.

The objective of the Council was to impart education (literary as well as scientific and technical) exclusively under national control. It was also decided by the Council to promote physical and moral education and to inspire students with a genuine love for and a real desire to serve their country. Religious education, excluding the enforcement of religious rites and practices, was also included. The Council attached special importance to a knowledge of the country, its literature, history and philosophy incorporating the best oriental ideals of life with the best assimilable ideals of the West. The medium of instruction was chosen as the vernacular, English being a compulsory subject. This education policy was to permeate the Indian spirit which is pure, sublime and tolerant.

In July 1937 Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, wrote in "Harijan Patrika". "By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in the child and the man-body, mind and spirit". This concept is lacking to a great extent in our present education system. According to Gandhiji the real education will be to train children through some suitable form of productive work. This in future will develop the power of creativity. This is the literacy of the whole personality and it will cultivate a true sense of dignity of labour and of human solidarity.

In 1944 C.A.B.E (Central Advisory Board of Education) published a comprehensive report on the post-war educational policy. Emphasis

was placed on the universal, compulsory and free basic education for all boys and girls between the ages six to fourteen and also on adult education as well as education for the handicapped and weaker sections of the society. It was also decided to establish an efficient system of university education which must provide technical education in order to meet the growing needs of the country. There must be special provision for recreative and social activities on which UGC is now giving much emphasis (NEPA programme). However, this policy could not be enforced because of the war.

After independence in 1947 a new era ushered in young India. The significant feature was the establishment of the University Education Commission (1948-49) under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The task before the Commission was to review the present system of education and to find ways and means to make it meaningful and more appropriate for the present and the future requirements of the country. It was also aimed at making our students conscious about the cultural unity and love for higher values of life. After all, education is a training of both minds and souls and hence it should impart both knowledge and wisdom. According to Swami Vivekananda "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Education is not the amount of information that is put in your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man making, character-making assimilation of ideas." In this context I would like to quote-

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries bring us farther from God and nearer to the dust."

The Commission felt that education at all stages forms an integrated whole. Hence as the university is the major functional organization to fulfil this objective it is imperative to improve and maintain the standard of education in the university. It cannot be denied that the trained personnel from the university forms the human resource

for our schools and colleges, vocational institutions, research institutions, industries, administrative organisations and rural development (NAEP) work. Therefore for a better India the country needs guidance from her men of letters and men of science and technology, from her poets, artists, from her discoverers and inventors. Such intellectuals are the products of universities which are the sanctuaries of the inner life of the nation. Universities stand for the ideal causes inculcating the basic human values, the values of democracy, justice and liberty, equality and fraternity. It is imperative that we must preserve and foster our cultural traditions and blend them with the essential elements from other cultures and people. The Commission suggested three language formulation of which English must be studied in the high schools and in the universities so that we may keep in touch with the stream of evergrowing knowledge. In this context it deserves mention that the study of English has been made compulsory in China from the K.G. level. It was also emphasised that the University Grants Commission be set up for allocation of grants and also special attention be paid to the development of rural universities.

In the post-independence period there has been a phenomenal development in education at all levels. We have now 124 universities, 5000 colleges, 45,000 secondary schools and 6,00,000 primary schools. The Government making serious efforts for universalisation of elementary education, and education for adult illiterates, schools dropouts and the children left out from the main stream of education.

To quote a visionary scientist, "We live in a world of fantastic scientific achievements. We have conquered time and distance, the sea and the sky. We have placed the satellite in space". Consider INSAT-IB. It is our pride and the index of high achievements in science and technology. "Our atomic submarines can stay for an unlimited time and cover unlimited distances under water, our air crafts travel faster than sound. We operate push button factories, while electronic computers process in seconds data that some fifty years ago would have taken a life time of patience and toil for hundreds of men. In the human aspects

we are entering an era of the transplanted cornea, the synthetic arteries and perhaps the mechanical heart. At the cultural level microfilms and cards will replace huge libraries. Close circuit TV will bring to our drawing rooms the full facilities of regional libraries”.

In spite of these achievements our existing system of education is far from reality. The spirit of harmony, tolerance, devotion, sincerity and hard work is lacking.

The community feeling is gradually becoming unknown. Referring to the erosion of basic values of life it has been mentioned by the Education Commission under the leadership of Dr.D.S. Kothari that “We stand at a critical cross-road of history where the choice is between education and disaster. We must either build a sound, balanced, effective and imaginative educational system to our developing needs and respond to our challenging aspirations or be content to be swept aside by the strong currents of history”.

The need for an educational system that inculcates positive values and a national outlook has never been more acute in India's post-independence history than to-day. Such values like nationalism, secularism, pride in heritage, composite culture, harmony with nature etc. are being diffused. Also we find that the child, who is the seed of the future generation and should be carefully nurtured, is being robbed of his/her full development by not receiving any guidance in the early and formative periods towards a recognition of the religious aspects of life. If this guidance is left to homes and communities, the chances are that communal bigotry and selfishness would find root in the child of to-day and grow in the young man/woman of tomorrow.

One of the greatest lessons to be learnt from true education is that we must pay as much attention to the work as to its end. Our defect is that we are drawn so much to the goal, which appears more enchanting and alluring, that we forget the means of attaining it. As a result we often become frustrated and forget the purpose for which we are working.

So to the students who have assembled here I would like to remind them of Swami Vivekananda's message "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. The education that does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy and the courage of a lion- is it worth the name" ?

Coming to the developments and activities of this University which is now 22 years old, I feel that the University has made remarkable progress in spite of meagre funds and facilities. It is gratifying to note that NSS units have been implemented successfully. This University, though isolated, from the rest of India has a unique geographical situation with lofty mountains on the north and with superb beauty of nature bringing a soothing effect on mind. This peaceful atmosphere is indeed a coveted one. Such environment will undoubtedly help the students to concentrate in their studies and other activities for their faculty growth. Some of the more important studies which can be undertaken in this particular campus are science on environment, ecology balance, rural programmes, studies on natural products and natural pesticides along with field experimentation.

In concluding I would like to emphasise that the education imparted by the teacher should help to build up the character of the student and to manifest his / her real nature - the Effulgent, the Resplendent and the Ever-pure. The end and aim of all training is to make the man/woman grow. As a result he/she would be ready to accept all that is best in the West and adapt it according to India's needs. We must never forget for a moment that we are Indians and this according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan is "Indian does not mean merely being born in the geographical area called India but in adhering to certain values and ideals that India stands for".

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