

First Convocation held on October 31, 1965**Professor V. K. R. V. Rao***

I must begin by expressing my deep appreciation of the honour done to me by this university by the invitation to address their first convocation. My pleasure is enhanced by the fact that yours is a frontier university of India and your students include so many Indians who live in the hill areas and stand guard over the inviolability of our frontiers.

We are meeting today at a critical moment in the history of our country. Within a short period of three years, we have had to face two invasions, one from our northern neighbour in 1962, and the other from our western neighbour in August and September this year. I say western neighbour, because though Pakistan includes East Bengal, it is western Pakistan that has shown itself in aggression, with east Pakistan taking little or no interest in the conflict. Though the fighting is over, the conflict has not ended. With China still occupying a large portion of Indian territory and Pakistan using the ceasefire as a prelude to a renewal of its armed aggression, India continues to be menaced by the threat of war. She may be able to secure peace if she is prepared to surrender and pay a price which will not only involve loss of territory but also loss of honour, dignity, and self-respect and with it also the loss of all the values she has stood for and attempted to make the base of her new society. India is not willing to pay this price. Her leaders have said so and this includes not only the government but also all the opposition parties. Her people have stood solidly and unambiguously behind their leaders in this stand. Indeed, it is difficult to say whether it is the leaders who reflect the mind of the people in this respect or it is the people who have been influenced by their leaders in taking up this attitude. The truth seems to be that both people and leaders have been caught in an

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irresistible tide of patriotic emotion and regard for national dignity, honour and self-respect. But we must not forget that a price has also to be paid for standing fast by our values and preserving the inviolability of our territorial integrity. And it is about this price that I want to address you today.

Before I talk to you about the content and implications of the price we have to pay for the maintenance of our national honour and self-respect, I would like to dwell for a while on what we are fighting for. Ours is a multi-lingual, and multi-religious society. The diversity that our country contains is in some respects more global than national in the sense that one has to put together a number of other nations in order to produce a society comparable to ours in the extent and variety of its different elements. And yet we are a nation, conceived not by conquest but by consent, and held together not by tyranny or violence but by self-government and fraternity. The reality of the national sentiment that binds the vast numbers of people into a single entity has been proven again and again in our recent history. Mahatma Gandhi ignited the spark and then fanned it into a flame that shone all the brighter because of its non-violent texture. When the Father of the Nation gave his life in the cause of secularism and inter-religious harmony, the many million Indian hearts beat as one and on the scattered ashes of his mortal form rose an India that gave the lie to the thesis on which the British has partitioned this great sub-continent. By his martyrdom, Gandhi laid the secular foundations of modern India and made possible the growth of a nation from a multi-religious society. His chosen heir and successor, Jawaharlal Nehru, built on these foundations, nurtured the tender plant of secularism that Gandhiji had watered literally with his blood, and saw it grow into a sturdy and valiant tree that stood unbending and unshaken in the face of the steady stream of communal

hate that poured forth from our theocratic and Islamic neighbour state of Pakistan. Alas, he did not live to see the tree stand the test, but stand it did, as we have seen in the last weeks. Abdul Hamid, Tarapore, the Keelers, and many others like Sikhs who fought on the battle fields of Lahore and Sialkot to protect their common motherland and the inviolability of its constituent units, while behind them, the men of many faiths who constitute India prayed for her victory in churches, and mosques, temple and gurdwaras and worked side by side with vigour and purpose not like standardised automatons fabricated by a dictatorial will be with their individualities well-preserved and their differences blending into a common garment of Indian nationality. India is the nation in the world that has more Moslems than most Moslem countries. She is the one nation in the world that has more Christian than many Christian countries. Indeed she has more minorities than every other nation in the world; and yet, she constitutes one nation and her majorities and minorities constitute one people. This is glory of India and this is the challenge that India offers to the world. From the lofty Himalayas to the sea-swept cape comorin, we proclaim our faith that religion is not the basis of nationality. Secularism is the flavour that gives savour to the Indian Nationality. So if the salt loseth its savour, with that shall we salten the broth Indian nationalism? You can see therefore why we fight for Kashmir, not merely because it is a valued part of Indian territory, be even more because it is a part of the soul of our nation. 'Secular India cannot and will not compromise on the principle of a mull religious nationality, come what may in the form of pressures worse whether from Pakistan or her allies or even from such of our own friends as would surrender principle to expediency and the short view. In taking up this stand, India is fighting not for her own integrity, but also for the future integrity of the world as a whole, for there can never be a world state even in the distant future if religion is made to

divide rather than unite men and women of different faiths.

Our fight is not only for secularism. It is also for establishing the defensibility of a democratic society, even if its origin did go back to the Magna Charta and its defenders were Asians who did not originate from the western hemisphere. I admire many western nations because of the successful working of their political democracies. I am also prepared to admit that we Indians have learnt to work and cherish political democracy as our way of life largely from our contact with western political thought and experience. But I am not prepared to accept the thesis that is implicit in so many western attitudes and explicit in our critics that political democracy can grow only in western soil and that it must end in infant mortality in Asia and Africa. Whatever may be the position in other Asian and African countries, India has a political system of the genuine western and liberal brand, with parliamentary democracy, ministerial responsibility, periodic elections, adult franchise, secret ballot, civil liberty, and the rule of law. We started our independent existence with this system, and we have kept it working and in full measure during all these years, with three general elections, and a fourth one in the offing. It is true that our people do not speak with one voice, that there are inter-state and inter-group rivalries, that our political parties fight each other, and that even within the same parties, there are group conflicts and contests for personal power. Our democratic society has in peace time given the appearance of disunity, factionalism, groupism and all the other ills that seem to indicate a decaying rather than a virile polity. To infer from all this that Indian democracy is a failure and foredoomed to destruction like the democracies in neighbouring Asian countries betokens political immaturity not only on the part of western critics but also of those of our analysts who have joined their band wagon. In actual fact, democracy functions no better in peace time in

any western country. Indeed no western country has the size or the diversity or the extent of federalism that characterises the Indian polity. And yet we continue to retain a genuinely democratic political system and we shall continue to do so in spite of any force or pressure that may be exerted not only by our non-democratic enemies but even by our so-called friends who glory in their own political democracy but would perhaps like to keep it as their superior monopoly. In this fight for democracy, we are fighting not only for the values we cherish but also for the world as a whole which has no future in the long run if it does not learn to reconcile individual liberty with organised state power by the leaven of political democracy.

We are fighting not only for secularism and political democracy, we are also fighting for economic democracy, for the betterment of the common man, the uplift of the masses, the establishment of a socialist society. It is true that we have not advanced sufficiently in the direction of socialism, for we are handicapped by the low economic base from which we have started our independent career, the imperatives of economic growth tend to blur the distributional needs of a socialist society, and our belief in political democracy and with it the acceptance of a mixed economy lead to compromises between the twin principles of maximum production and equitable distribution. All the same, our goal is clear and our path is definite. India has accepted the objective of planned development, the establishment of a socialist society, the creation of a cooperatives commonwealth, and the achievement of a way of life that will give the common man the opportunity to better himself and rise, to live in equality, freedom and dignity with his better-placed fellow citizens. India does not propose to give up this ideal at the behest of other nations with different ways of life even if the latter bring on economic and other more subtle pressures to do so. Here again,

we fight not only for the values we cherish but also for the world as whole, for in the long run, humanity itself has no future if it can function only on competition, selfishness and the law of the jungle and not on cooperation, socialism, and a just and equitable society.

You see therefore that we are fighting not only for our territorial integrity and the inviolability of our frontiers, we are also fighting for a way of life, for secularism, democracy and socialism in fact, for a system of values not only dear to us but also of imperative necessity to the future of humanity and the establishment of a decent and enduring world order. But this involves a price.

What is this price that India has to pay in order to defend her integrity, retain her values, and functions as torch bearer for the just and enduring society of common humanity that we want to see established in the world?

First is determination and discipline. We have to sink all our petty little differences, resist all stimuli, from wherever they emanate, to the parochial, the communal or the sub-national element that may still persist in our sub-conscious regions and unite as one entity, one nation and one people. No one is better fitted to undertake this task than you, the young graduates of this university, who typify the youth of the land. Unity and a sense of common belonging is needed not only in action but also in thought and word. We have to think Indian, feel Indian, and talk Indian, if we are to be Indian in an effective and invincible way. This is the time when groups in the country, whether political, religious, linguistic or otherwise, should treat each other with generosity and affection, with each other in giving rather than taking, and build up the invisible bonds that constitute the steel frame of an enduring nation. No one is better fitted to give the lead in this matter than the young for

not only are their hearts more responsive to the ideal in their nature, but they are also the main stake-holders in the future both our country and the world at large. This cannot be done however without discipline. The discipline required has to show itself in you everyday life, in your indifference to petty motivations, your tolerance of ways of life different from yours when it is co-existent with love of the country and determination to defend its honour and dignity, and your willingness to put up with restraints, austerities, hardships in order to mobilise the nation's resources for the national defence. It is this national will that you must evolve and it is the national determination and discipline that you must consciously build in order to give body and bone to the national will. No power on earth can crush a nation like ours when it discovers its national will and steels itself to act upon it with discipline and determination. It is the students of this country and the youth of this land that can help to discover, sustain, and make action possible in this national will. You are in the vanguard of this battle for survival of both of us as a nation and of our cherished values; and I have no doubt that you will give a good account of yourselves and not let the front falter or hesitate in the face of the enemy.

The second element in the price that we have to pay is in terms of our current and expected standards of consumption. The country has to realise that defence means resources and while defence also means development, the development will be of a kind that will not mean more consumption. Even in the richest of countries, defence always means diversion of resources from civilian needs to military requirements. In a country like ours, there is no escaping this diversion. True, we can increase the size of the national cake by more determined and better planned utilisation of our vast resources of manpower, but the increase will have to go for defence and not for consumption. All of

us who are civilians and non-combatants have to adopt austere standards in our consumption levels and patterns. Many things we would like to have we have to postpone for the time being, for we have to release resources for defence and development connected with defence. It would be a good thing if every one of us were to impose a voluntary cut in our levels of monthly expenditure, quite apart from the cuts that government may impose on our incomes by enhanced taxation. It would be an even better thing if those of us whose incomes have given us a good standard of living so far were now to impose a voluntary ceiling on our monthly expenditure as long as the emergency lasts and our defence is not strong enough to deter covetous neighbours from even thinking of aggression, let alone acting upon it. It was Mahatma Gandhi who talked of a ceiling on individual incomes; and it was he who took to the loin cloth in order that he may share the poverty of those who had the privilege to be his fellow country men. I am not suggesting that we must all take to the loin cloth or lead the life of fakirs or sadhus. But I do suggest that if we are to win the war then we have to give up all luxuries, comforts and even conventional needs and functions as a civilian army ready to give the needed support to our men on the battle front. Only thus can we release the physical resources in skills and materials without which our armed force, however brave and willing to die, would not be able successfully to defend their motherland.

It is not enough to cut down our monthly expenditure and reduce our civilian demands upon the economy. It is also necessary to transfer our savings to government for financing its defence and development effort. Otherwise we run the risk of inflation, headlong rise in the prices of essential articles, and threat to civilian morale, especially of our workers in the fields and the factories. We have to save more; and we have to make these savings available for the defence effort. I know that a nation of low income individuals does not have much capacity to

save. But this is in the context of peace and routine activity. But when a nation has to fight for its very survival, then our motives of savings as surpluses must undergo a radical change. Even as a poor family with sub-standard levels of consumption finds nevertheless the surplus to give an extra feed to its infant or ailing member, so must a poor nation find a surplus for feeding its soldiers with the equipment that they need. The savings I am talking about are not the classical savings that at either involuntary or are deliberately created to go into investment that will yield a handsome monetary profit. The savings I am talking about in the current context are not for investment for personal reward or aggrandisement. They are for national survival and for individual survival in so far as nationality and values go to make up their share of the individual. Savings for defence and development therefore do not constitute a surplus over consumption. They take rank with consumption and indeed even claim priority over a unnecessary and non-functional consumption. When we take this view of savings that we can find the resources necessary for the defence effort and find it in a way that will avoid a stab in the back by way of inflation. All can take part in this effort, not only the rich but also the poor, and not only the old and the middle age but also the young and the adolescent, including even the tender children of school-going age. It is a hard price to pay, but the price has to be paid, for the issues at stake are beyond all price.

A third component is the price we have to pay for defence and development is the surrender, to the maximum possible extent, of our dependence upon imports and foreign sources. In other words this should apply not only to military but also to civil requirements. Self-reliance is a difficult concept. It does not necessarily mean ability to pay in foreign exchange for what we are not able to produce at home. It means therefore not only import substitution but also export promotion. It also means giving up our reliance of foreign aid unless we can get it on terms that

do not constitute even conceal any pressure on us to change our domestic or foreign policies. In any case, self-reliance must mean the giving up of PL-480 imports and the implementation of Self-Sufficiency in food. It certainly means a considerable reduction in our dependence upon imports. All this is going to mean tremendous effort on the part of our farmers, our industrial workers our entrepreneurs, our scientists and research workers and our civil servants. It means duplication, designing and improvisation; and order to reduce the load on scarce materials. It also means change in producer preferences and consumer preferences. Self-reliance will also involve changes in plan regard to non-food and non-basic articles of essential necessity. It is not that we have not been pursuing a policy of self-reliance. But we been doing it without causing any strain or distress to immediate requirements, Now, we have to step up the pace.

Last, but not least, among the components of the price to be paid for defence and development is a much-needed change in the motivation of work, savings and investment. It is all right in peacetime to talk of incentives for every extra bit of work or saving that is needed for development and to give these incentives in monetary form and for the personal benefit of individual participants. But against the present background of emergency and the consequent need for acceleration of defence and related development without incurring the self-defeating risk of inflation, we have to think more seriously of non-monetary and non-personal motivations for the required extra effort. I believe that this change in motivation is not beyond the pale of practical politics; but come from those who enjoy strategies the lead must positions in the economy and enjoy incomes far in excess of those earned by the rest of their countrymen. Equality of sacrifice is the basic bind that enables a nation at war to rise to the full heights of its potentialities.

When the flower of our youth have made and are willing to make the supreme sacrifice on the battle field, how can we who remain behind the front, think in terms of economic incentives and extra rewards for every bit of extra work that we do? This is the question that all of us who are non-combatants and who are required to contribute their extra bit to the defence effort have to ask ourselves; and on the answer we give, I think, will depend much of the success that we can achieve as a nation in this critical hour of our history.

I must now bring my convocation address to a close. I have been somewhat unorthodox in the choice of my theme, but I could not help it in the face of the problems that stare us in the face today. We are engaged in a struggle for the retention of our values and the maintenance of our territorial integrity and our national identity. We have to pay a price for continuing this struggle and bringing it to a successful conclusion. The price is high but the stakes are even higher. I believe we can do it and my faith rests largely on my faith in the younger generation. They have not only to play a direct role but, have also, by their way of life, play an indirect but the even more important role of contribute to the ideals of Secularism and Socialism. Swami Vivekananda always talked of the daridra-narayan and the need for serving man as a way of serving God. In our own days, Mahatma Gandhi talked of the daridra-narayan and spent his life trying to serve him. If only our student community could follow this lead, and go in for identification with and service of the masses, then socialism could be brought much nearer in our time than all the efforts which our leaders have put in the last seventeen years have been able to do. When this is done, and our country is not only a nation, secular and democratic but also socialistic, then the nation and the people become one, our society gets classless and casteless, and we shall have an inner strength as a

nation that no neighbour nor combination of neighbours or their friends will be able to touch, let alone break. This is my theme. It has arisen from the emergency, but goes beyond it. It is upto you, my young friends, to answer the challenge. I, for one, have no doubt about your ability to do so.

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