

ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF THE NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY

Address by

PROFESSOR S. NURUL HASAN  
CHANCELLOR

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Dr. G.Ram Reddy, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, members of the authorities of the University, recipients of degrees, diplomas and prizes, ladies and gentlemen;

I have great pleasure in extending a very warm welcome to the Chief Guest, Dr. G.Ram Reddy. An eminent scholar with vast experience of the affairs of Universities in India and abroad and a pioneer of distant education, he is specially welcome to this Convocation. He had a very busy programme and many engagements, but he took the trouble of finding the time to come and visit us. On behalf of the University I wish to thank him profusely for the trouble he has undertaken. I am grateful to him for his learned and thought-provoking address which, I am sure, will inspire the graduates of the year.

2. From the address of the Vice-Chancellor you have learnt about the progress which the University has made inspite of the severe crunch of resources. I would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor and his colleagues for the manner in which they have maintained the progress of the University inspite of the shortage of funds.

3. While referring to the shortage of resources I am not complaining to the UGC for its inability to give generous grants to the Universities. The resources placed at the disposal of the UGC by the Government are inadequate to meet the requirements of a developing society. Our Constitution imposes on the State the obligation to provide equality of educational opportunity to the citizens of the country. The concept of equality of opportunity makes it very clear that the State should not and cannot discriminate between young men and women whose parents can afford to pay high fees and those who cannot raise enough resources. Therefore, merely raising tuition and other fees will not solve the problems of higher education. A proper strategy of expansion of higher education has to be worked out.

4. In the context of West Bengal, we must take appropriate steps in a phased manner to delink higher Secondary Classes from Colleges. Where necessary the facilities of the College may continue to be used for a strictly limited period by the students and teachers of the Higher Secondary Section. But organisationally a separation should take place as quickly as possible and natural vacancies occurring in the staff should be filled

up by persons who will be teaching exclusively college classes or the Higher Secondary Classes.

5. If the Higher Secondary Classes are separated it would be found that a large number of Colleges would cease to be viable. Efforts should, therefore, be made to combine together wherever feasible non-viable colleges so that they cease to be non-viable. This may cause a little hardship but if the issues are explained to teachers, students and their guardians, I have every hope that their cooperation can be secured.

6. There are too many colleges which are teaching purely Arts subjects. Consequently, there is a glut of Arts graduates in the employment market. There is a glaring inadequacy of science teachers especially of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. If the country is to move forward we need many more persons with appropriate qualifications in physical sciences. The situation is not too bad in respect of natural science subjects, but those who are studying Life Sciences at the B.Sc. or B.Sc.(Hons.) levels do not have adequate training to go in for various professions which are suffering from a dearth of trained manpower. Our country is going in for advanced electronics instrumentation but we do not have a large enough reserve of manpower which can properly maintain sophisticated instruments and apparatuses. A carefully worked out policy of vocationalisation should have an inbuilt evaluation mechanism which may ensure that the training needs are constantly updated and the educational institutions are not saddled with equipments which soon become out of date.

7. Apart from electronic instruments and machinery we have to train many more persons in modern Information Technology. Training in mass communication depends heavily on informatics. In the same way modern business practices, specially Banking and International Trade, require persons who are really qualified to handle modern Information Technology.

8. As our economy is moving in the direction of globalisation we have to find our own technology of production which will not only be cost effective in satisfying domestic needs and requirements but would also enable the country to export more, maintaining high level of quality and a price level which is competitive. This requires research support of the highest order. No R & D effort of the country will strengthen its production base if the Universities are not enabled to train young people adequately and help them to learn techniques of modern research. I do hope that industries would give generous support to the Universities to build up their schools of basic research. But our industrial base is so small that the State will have to accept the responsibility for supporting the research programme of the University.

9. A very large number of our graduates and professions are finding employment in different developing countries as well as in highly advanced countries. Many of these persons send money to their friends and relatives which helps us to improve our foreign exchange position. Indians who have established themselves successfully abroad are being invited more directly to contribute to

the industrial development of the country as NRIs. A long range view, therefore, makes it clear that these programmes of economic development are dependent on the quality of their training, education and research which Universities provide to young men and women.

10. The highly qualified graduates are human resources which are of inestimable importance. I hope every effort will be made to sustain the quality of education and to improve it so that not only individuals may benefit but the country goes forward.

11. To those who have received degrees, diplomas and prizes I offer my sincere congratulations and all good wishes for a fruitful career in the near future. Let them bring credit to their families, to their alma mater and to the nation.

Jai Hind.