

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Address by

Shri Umashankar Dikshit

Governor, West Bengal

and

Chancellor,

North Bengal University

RAJARAMMOHUNPUR

4th DECEMBER, 1984

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Asima Chatterjee, Distinguished
Guests, Colleagues of the various departments of the University,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a singularly happy event for a Governor who is to discharge his obligations as Chancellor of the State's Universities, that exactly two months after assuming charge, he is here to preside over the XVIII Annual Convocation of the University. I am more particularly glad of this opportunity to meet the respected community of the teachers of the University and offer a few remarks based on my fairly long experience of public life and general knowledge of the educational institutions of some of the major States of India.

I really regard your University, in some respects a unique Institution, because of the region where it is located largely for the benefit of those sections of the community whose education has been neglected for centuries and who have unfortunately remained educationally, socially and economically depressed and deprived of the great benefits of modern education. I mean the so-called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes though the University also caters to the needs of the citizens inhabiting North Bengal's five districts.

First of all, I heartily welcome Prof. Asima Chatterjee, a deeply learned and talented educationist and a well-known expert in pure Chemistry who has, as Chief Guest, delivered her stimulating and thought-provoking address this morning.

Our Vice-Chancellor Prof. D.B. Dutta has given to us a fairly comprehensive account of the activities, successes and problems of the University. In my opinion, the Vice-Chancellor, Professors and other Teachers as well as various office-bearers and the students community can claim legitimate pride over the progress achieved by the University in a matter of a little over two decades after its establishment in 1962.

Being a teaching-run affiliating University, it has 42 affiliated colleges and 14 or 15 Post Graduate Departments in the Campus. Prof. Dutta is carrying a heavy responsibility in managing such an institution with 125 teachers for the various disciplines and nearly 1,000 Post Graduate students.

Prof. Dutta has acquainted me in advance with the problem of shortage of finance necessary for meeting the needs of progress, completion of unfinished tasks and an unending variety of problems of development in a growing institution. I may add that your dedicated Vice-Chancellor has informed me that a provision of about Rupees One Crore and Five Lakhs assured by the University Grants Commission the University had received only about 89 Lakhs. For the subsequently planned projects and departmental needs for the VII plan he would meet a couple of crores or so hereafter. With his help I shall try to absorb the rationate of the needs and demands and plead with the authorities concerned on behalf of the University as best as possible.

Ladies & Gentlemen, let me first make a passing reference to some of the problems relating to the broad national subject of Education. What are or ought to be the principal objectives which educational institutions should aim to achieve in present day India? Whether she wants or not, India is in the race for attaining the highest possible levels not only of science and technology but in the fields of industrial management, running of the country's administration, strategic requirements of the nation and the broad socio-economic development of the country generally. It is an imperative necessity to keep pace with the levels of education in the advance countries of the West. Present day students are obliged to acquire far higher and more numerous branches of knowledge in almost all disciplines of education than their forbears studying in the similar classes of 30 or 40 years ago needed to do. This upgrading of standards and courses of study starts from higher middle and even lower middle classes, and by the time the students reach the under-graduate and post-graduate stages, the standards appear to a large section of the community a little too heavy or too complicated or even too difficult to comprehend. While this development is inevitable and must be continued in the broader national interest, it is generating the problems of dropouts of high percentage of failures, and lower quality of knowledge among those who pass out of the schools, colleges and universities.

As you are probably, more or less all aware, a variety of malpractices have crept into the system. There is widespread

laxity in admissions and the standard of administration in schools and colleges, which feed the universities, has considerably deteriorated. I do not know exactly about the condition in West Bengal, but from the information I have of several other States there are credible reports of mass copying at examinations, awarding of grace marks, and common use of "keys" and "guides" which may give the student some temporary ability to do the test papers but which give hardly any real knowledge of the subjects. The problem is sometimes compounded by another minor factor. Some brilliant teachers sometime display their originality in setting papers beyond the capacity of even the more intelligent and hardworking students. In some cases the questions asked relate to chapters of text books never taught during the academic year.

The Major problem which under-graduate education has specially to face is that of employment, I mean educated unemployment. Greater the number of students passing out of educational institutions, potential applicants for jobs, greater the measure of educated unemployment. The manual worker, despite various obstacles, is able some how to manage some job or other, temporary or permanent, enough to keep his body and soul together. On the other hand the raw graduate without having received any special training, often feels helpless. For this situation the increasing volume of population, inadequacy of employment opportunities in industrial establishments and the unwillingness on the part of most educated youngmen and women to take to self-employment, even though opportunities have in recent times, been increasing in various forms.

What is then to be done to tackle the twin problems of production of excellence in higher levels of education and training, especially in science, and higher technology, and providing better opportunities of employment to those students who possess better aptitude for starting small industrial units with the help of free consultancy services and loan capital from banks and other financing agencies. Even those boys and girls who cannot take up small industry due to lack of minimum financial resources and business aptitude, can take to a variety of mechanical jobs, if they do not insist upon going in for higher education which they often do

owing the pressure of parents and their own aspiration to rise as high in education as their neighbour in school or college. To this end, it is essential that a machinery should be set up and maintained for testing of mental aptitude and identification of vocational preference.

As there is efficiency bar in promotion in service jobs, so also in my opinion there should be devised effective methods of providing correct guidance to the students who have completed the 10th or the 12th class. It must have been with this intention that the latest system of 10+2+3 has been introduced. Where it has been taken up in all States and whether it is producing the desired results I do not know. In my opinion, it is most desirable for the principals of schools and colleges and technical institutions to establish direct and co-operative contacts with heads of industrial and technical establishments both in the private and public sectors as also with the departmental heads of the State Governments. Every State Government can have a useful role to play in this respect through a system of co-ordination and collaboration with owners and managers of business establishments. In the case of public centre industries, the Central Government can help more effectively. It is imperative for the implementation section of the Planning Commission to see that the number of engineers, doctors, accountants, auditors, management graduates, computer experts, commercial painters and the like produced during a year in one State, or in the country as a whole, have some integral relation with the requirements in the respective fields of employment. I have an idea that such an attempt was made some time ago but perhaps because of the enormity of the problem it has not been pursued. In any case, such an effort would be worthwhile and should be practicable even if to start with the results are not commensurate with the needs of the situation.

I would like now to address a few words to the youngmen and women who have passed out of this University and are going to be awarded their degrees, diplomas and prizes at this Convocation. I want them to ask themselves one question 'What do I want from life? Is it physical pleasure or domestic felicity, attainment of name and fame, position of power and authority or

opportunity for public service." The answer in many cases would possibly be, "I want everything". My reply would be "my young friends you will have to decide your priorities, because only one goal can be achieved at a time. For reaching that goal it is imperative that the individual should take a firm resolve and concentrate his or her will upon the attainment of the objective of choice to the exclusion of everything else. It is only such a concentrated efforts, hard work, and application of maximum skill that any worthwhile objective can be achieved.

Raising the same issue in more practical terms, I assume that you, the students have to decide if you have not done so already the vocation you will seek, after leaving the University. Self-employment or service, private or public sector, Administration or politics, teaching or high research, a life of fine arts or serve the house of science. My warning would be, please keep more than one string to your bow. For it, not unoften, happens that one does not always reach the goal of one's first choice.

Before I close, I again congratulate Prof. Asima Chatterjee upon the learned address she has delivered at the XVIII convocation of the University. I also congratulate the students who have added to the reputation of their University by the success in life.

I must not omit to pay my sincere tribute to the Vice-Chancellor and the learned teachers who have combined to produce the good results I have spoken of.

I empress my thanks once more for this opportunity to deliver an address as Chancellor of the University.

JAI HIND.

(UMA SHANKAR DIKSHIT)
GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL

1-12-1984