



# University Of North Bengal

**Address by the Chancellor,**

**Shrimati PADMAJA NAIDU**

**AT THE**

**SECOND CONVOCATION.**

**RAJA RAMMOHANPUR**

**10th October 1966.**

# Address by the Chancellor,

**Shrimati PADMAJA NAIDU**

at the 2nd Convocation of the  
**University of North Bengal.**

*Madam Prime Minister, Chief Minister of West Bengal,  
Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Members, staff and students of the  
North Bengal University.*

I am happy to have today as its Chancellor, the prerogative of offering both welcome and thanks to the Prime Minister of India, whose presence here has been like the coming of spring and whose brilliant address with its thoughtful analysis of the students' problems today will long be remembered by them. There is a certain fitness, a pleasing harmony of pattern about this infant University receiving benedictions from one who has been acclaimed by the youth of India as a symbol of all their hopes and dreams for the future of our beautiful land which though it is very young as a nation is very ancient as a civilization.

Among other rare gifts, Shrimati Indira Gandhi inherited from her father and her grand father the priceless legacy of a dynamic patriotism illumined by a high sense of mission. This record is perhaps unmatched in the annals of history in any country or in any age of not two, but three successive generations of one family, all inspired by the teachings of the same great master, choosing deliberately, with pride and joy, to renounce all purely personal happiness in order to serve India through her millions. It is an incomparable saga of sacrifice and service which started in the black days of the "Rowlatt Act" and grew to its crescendo during those long, bitter decades of our indomitable fight against ruthless suppression. It was a Bengalee poet who said that "true as a peach to its ripening

bloom is Destiny to her hour." And so the destined hour came and India emerged free from the degrading bondage of alien domination. But then there followed the almost equally arduous, though perhaps much less spectacular, struggle to transmute political freedom into the socio-economic security which, in the ultimate analysis, is the only valid measure of the progress and prosperity of any nation. And today, with hostile neighbours on our frontiers and confronted by a myriad delicate and difficult interrelated problems arising out of the long tragic sequence of natural calamities, this gallant young Prime Minister is carrying an almost intolerably heavy burden of responsibility for the eradication of hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance from our country. Her address today — almost every speech that she makes, reveals how poignantly conscious she is always that if we are to become a strong and truly democratic nation, we must labour untiringly to implement, in the spirit as well as in the letter, the solemn pledges embodied in our constitution that guarantees to every citizen of free India equal rights and equal opportunities of rising to his full stature. How can we ever hope to fulfil to any enduring purpose our long cherished dream of a united and yet composite India unless we are indomitable in our fight against every single form of bigotry—against untouchability, against communalism, against linguism, against everything that threatens to destroy the precious fabric of our unity.

Today throughout India there is much talk, I personally venture to think there is far too much injudicious and unjustified talk, about corruption. That is a word that is usually used as a synonym for the unscrupulous acquisition of wealth which is of course an utterly sordid and despicable practice. But there is another and much more deadly form of it having far-reaching repercussions against which we must maintain unceasing vigilance. It is that corruption of the spirit, that

decadence of the mind, whose outward and visible tokens are an intolerant distrust of other men's ways of life and thought and worship. Any Indian, every Indian who, no matter in how remote a fashion, condones any form of bigotry that leads to internal strife and violence is himself guilty of violating the constitution that is the envy of many nations and should be the pride of India.

Before it is too late — in a little while it will be too late, let us make a united and determined endeavour to honour the high ethical principles embodied in our constitution. Otherwise we shall be in danger of being arraigned at the bar of history in the words of Paracelsus :

*Yea the conception was a rose,  
But the achievement is a rose grown grey.*

Young graduates of today, who are leaving the sheltering wing of this University to go out in the wide world that is full of travail and tumult, I dare not seek to deceive you with facile promises of a bright and easy future. Everywhere in the world life is growing more and more difficult and never again will there be a time when for any section of humanity life will be easy and effortless.

As I sat here this morning watching the degrees being conferred on you I could not help wondering in what fashion you will face and overcome the manifold challenge that the years will bring to you. If you have acquired through the knowledge you assimilated here that balanced sense of values which alone can guide you safely through every crisis, then we shall have succeeded in our attempt to provide a type of education suited to the special needs and peculiar genius of the youth of these important five Northern districts ranging from the Himalayas to the Padma river which is of course the Ganges.

We are very proud of the vast wealth of diversity of cultures and traditions and customs among the different peoples of this region, speaking many languages and following different creeds, the hill peoples of various ethnic origins who live in the Himalayan region bordering on Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, the people of the Gangetic plains with their historical background and all the tribal peoples with their ancient wisdom. How much they have to give to each other and to the rest of Bengal.

It was the prophetic eyes of the creator of modern Bengal, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, that saw a vision of this University that he had founded gradually evolving a rich synthesis of all the different cultures and customs and traditions and art and craft of this region and ultimately becoming a great centre of national integration. Whether this dream of that patriarchal visionary will ever be fulfilled depends upon the students of this University, on the traditions that they build up while they are here and the way in which they interpret these traditions when they go out into the world.

Every educational institution in the early transitional period of its development inevitably has to face immense difficulties and obstacles. In the case of this University they were greatly magnified, because during its brief existence of four years there have been two national emergencies caused by conflicts on two borders of this region. However, in spite of all our handicaps we have tried to equip you to find careers in the vast network of schemes for the regeneration of India's economy which is the fundamental purpose of our successive Five Year Plans.

To all of you I offer my blessings and my good wishes for your success and happiness in the future. I can wish nothing finer for all of you individually and collectively than this :- that that no matter what path you may be destined to walk, you will always walk serene, unafraid and with head unbowed.