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KOLHAPUR.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Senate, Graduates of the year, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my first visit to Kolhapur and it has given me very great pleasure to see the spirit of initiative and self-reliance among the people of this region. It is a privilege that I should be asked to address the convocation of this university— young, almost an infant in years, but heir to a great and rich tradition symbolised in this centre of learning and art. It is my first duty to thank the university, for its kind invitation to me and to extend my blessings to all the young men and women who are graduating today.

Kolhapur has long been a centre of education to which people have flocked from all over southern Maharashtra and even adjoining places. The enlightened policy of its Princes in providing free education and even free boarding was responsible for this. The example of Kolhapur in the South and Baroda in the North is something unique in the field of free education. It was, therefore, appropriate that when the time came for considering the establishment of a university to serve the needs of the southern districts of Maharashtra, Kolhapur was chosen as the seat of this new university. The Shivaji University has been functioning for just a few years now, but it is already holding promise of developing into a first-rate institution of this kind. I am happy to know that its Vice-Chancellor, Dr. A. G. Pawar, and his devoted group of colleagues are doing well to put Kolhapur in the forefront of institutions of learning in our country. Together with you all, I wish them success in this laudable effort.

Of late, there has been an attempt in various regions of the country for the establishment of new universities. This is welcome in that it shows the value that our people attach to university education for our children. At the same time, there is a certain element of competition among districts in that they have come to look upon a university as a status symbol, without which they cannot do. This is not the right attitude. The aim of establishing a regional university is that there are certain aspects of culture and of economic life which are identified with the region and which will get maximum attention by way of study only through the

establishment of a regional university. The Shivaji University has been formed with this end in view. There are broad aspects of life and culture which are common to the five districts that are now under the jurisdiction of this university. In its turn, the Shivaji University should give its maximum attention to the needs of this region and the study of its problems. It is but appropriate that the area which led to the formation of the university should benefit from the establishment of the university. It is from this point of view that I would like to share some of my thoughts with you today. It occurs to me that this university should focus its attention on three fields of study which are of great significance for this region. These are agriculture, small-scale industries and co-operation. This region provides an ideal setting for an agro-industrial society to flourish. The Shivaji University can play a leading part in this venture and help set up patterns and guidelines for other areas to follow.

Two things are uppermost in the minds of all Indians today. One is how to defend the sovereignty and dignity of our country and the other is how to strengthen the national economy and help its progress at a good speed. Naturally, these two things are closely tied. Any development of our national economy will immediately strengthen the defence capacity of our country. National defence and food self-sufficiency are the two items that must receive the highest priority in all our planning. Every region has to pull its weight and every institution of research and of learning can help the country go forward at a quick pace.

Southern Maharashtra abounds in challenges and opportunities. Even from the topographical point of view, the region provides strong contrasts. Fertility of soil differs widely from taluka to taluka; rainfall ranges from heavy downpours in Ratnagiri to almost negligible amounts in eastern Solapur. The economic pattern varies all the way from rich, irrigated cane fields to dry farming dependent completely on the vagaries of the monsoon. It will be very difficult to draw up a plan for agricultural improvement for the entire region. At the same time, looking at it from the university's point of view, its students are provided with various agricultural economies for their study and research. You have two regional colleges now in Ratnagiri and Kolhapur to study agriculture. A third one in the Solapur region will complete that broad spectrum when it will be possible to devote specialised attention in each institution to the peculiar needs of the area surrounding it. I do hope some philanthropist will come forward to help the university set up such a college in the Solapur region.

Kolhapur and Sangli have long been famous for their progressive agriculture. This is a heritage on which the Shivaji University should draw to the maximum extent. Maharashtra, along with the rest of the country, continues to depend on

agriculture as the mainstay of its economy. It is true that agricultural activity contributes less to the State income than in other parts of India. This is the result of the high degree of industrialisation in Maharashtra as compared with the rest of the country. It is still true that unless we bring about a great improvement in agricultural output in this State, we will not be able to take Maharashtra forward. This is not merely because of the fact that some 70 per cent of our people are dependent on agriculture for a living. There is another compelling factor. Our State is highly deficit in food and has to depend on imports from other regions of the country, as well as overseas, to keep its population fed. It is marginally surplus only in jowar and has to import rice and wheat in fairly large quantities to make up the deficit. This is not a situation in which we would like our State to continue for any long time. We owe it to ourselves and to the country that we should try to make up the deficit as much as possible.

There are various difficulties standing in the way of taking Maharashtra along the road to self-sufficiency. Much of the land in the State is far from fertile. It has long been exposed to surface erosion and bad cultivation practices. Large areas need basic improvements like contour bunding, terracing or de-salinisation. Though a number of important rivers traverse the State, it is still a fact that the area under irrigation is very limited. The maximum extent that we can hope to see irrigated is 30 per cent of the sown area. But even this improvement will take us 20 years to bring about. In this context, we have to make full use of other agencies for raising farm output.

Minor irrigation has long been an important feature in our plans. It would seem to offer the right answer to an area of hills and valleys with rain concentrated in one season of the year. Kolhapur and Satara, as also Ratnagiri, may provide scope for a number of such small schemes. Minor irrigation offers a number of advantages. It is not capital intensive. It can be completed within a short time. It will not need foreign exchange. The return will be commensurate with the effort put in. Your university can take the initiative in this regard and come up with suggestions to suit different areas in this region. Our progress during the third plan is heartening. Our aim has been to build nearly a hundred thousand irrigation wells and set up about fifty thousand sets for pumping water. Lift irrigation is of great significance for us because of topography. Kolhapur and Sangli have set the pattern for lift and minor irrigation. As in other things, you have been able to make great use of the co-operative principle in this sphere as well. This is a record which is well worth emulation by other regions similarly placed.

The sadly eroded hills of Sahyadri stand today as mute witnesses to the unscientific methods of agriculture and animal husbandry in those areas. We are already paying a heavy price for this serious neglect. Afforestation has to be

undertaken on a large scale. Your university can lend a helping hand in this and its advice will be of great value.

Next to water, where it can be made available, come improved methods of farming like the use of quality seeds, of the right type of fertilisers and of pesticides. Our Zilla Parishads have been entrusted with the task of planning and carrying out the work of propagating improved seeds. This is an area where popular institutions drawing upon their direct links with the mass of cultivators can produce the maximum result. The advice and guidance of specialists will always be available, but there can be no substitute for popular and direct leadership at the “grass roots” level in terms of evoking the best response from our cultivators. It is only the Parishad members, living among the cultivators as one of them, who can set the right example and draw unstinted co-operation from the farmers. I had occasion, some time ago, to see the success that had attended the introduction of hybrid maize in Satara district. I daresay equally impressive things have been done in other districts of this region. I am using this only as an example to drive home the important point that the best agency for popularising the use of improved seeds should be the Zilla Parishads and their members. Research has shown that a Mexican wheat variety can be successfully grown in India and will raise yield by nearly 50 per cent. Similar results are expected to follow the use of Formosan and Japanese varieties of rice.

Turning to the use of fertilisers, we are faced with the fact that India uses about one kilo for each acre of her agricultural land as against 95 kilos in Japan. It may not be feasible for us to get anywhere near the Japanese record, nor is it absolutely necessary. The average even for the United States is said to be seven kilos an acre. The difficulties in the way of a wider use of chemical fertilisers are many. Many of our farmers do not yet know the advantages of using fertilisers. Those that are aware of this have been finding it difficult to get the right type of fertiliser at the right time for the right price. This state of affairs is partly due to short supply and partly also to the price factor which puts it out of reach of many cultivators. A factory like the one that is coming up at Trombay costs us Rs. 30 crores. On the other hand, we are importing Rs. 25 crores worth of fertiliser every year. We are also spending millions a year on food imports. It needs no argument, therefore, to say that every rupee spent on fertiliser production in our country will pay us a rich dividend. One ton of plant nutrient, it has been calculated, will increase crop yield by ten tons. Greater use of fertiliser will be one of the most important plans in increasing food output in our country.

Obviously, production of fertilisers alone will not be enough. There will have to be a study of soil conditions which will help the agriculturist choose the

right type and quantity of the fertiliser which he should use. This is a form of extension service where the regional university can make a distinct contribution.

Improved methods, particularly in dry farming, can bring about a marked change in areas like Solapur and Satara. Dry farming as a technique has made vast strides in Israel and certain western States of the U. S. A. We can draw on their rich experiences in the field of soil and water conservation and introduce practices which will be of great use to our farmers.

The dry regions of our State may be made to sustain other forms of agricultural activity like dairy and poultry farming. There has long been a tradition of sheep and cattle raising in this area. This way of life has suffered, as many other activities, owing to years of neglect and lack of organisation. The Dhangars can be organised in co-operatives and helped to a better way of life. Qualified men can give them advice and counsel in the selection and rearing of animals and in the marketing of their produce. The Dhangars are well-known for their closely knit organisation; their energy and inherited skills can be led into new and fruitful channels where sheep farming can make a distinct contribution to the improvement of economy in a region where orthodox agriculture may not either be feasible or very profitable.

Poultry farming also offers a wide scope. Any agricultural family will stand to gain substantially if it can take to poultry farming. Research on the right type of breeds, on the right type of feed and the like, will be of direct benefit to the farmer and to the community.

Dairy farming by its nature offers more limited possibilities. Kolhapur and Sangli with their favourable location near rivers are already ahead in this sphere. It should be possible for other smaller towns and communities along the river banks to follow their example and take to dairying.

I have touched upon a few spheres of activity where the Shivaji University can play a direct and profitable part in improving regional economy. Levelling and terracing, contour bunding and draining, are by their nature items that have to be tailored to the needs of each area. The research stations that our government is maintaining in various parts have their part to play in this, as in other ways of improving agriculture. Yet it will be of great and immediate value if an independent institution like your university can engage in this task from both the academic and practical points of view and help thereby in the regeneration of our agriculture.

There is one other aspect of the food problem to which also you can give fruitful attention. Our diet is generally poor in protein content. An easy way of making up this deficit and also in helping relieve food shortage is through an

increased consumption of fish and other types of seafood. We have a long coastline and fishing is a traditional occupation in Ratnagiri and other coastal districts. Our Government is actively aiding in improving the methods of fishing and marketing. The university can undertake a study of marine biology of fishing grounds and other aspects like preservation and marketing, which can prove of great practical use. Our people consume four pounds of fish per head per year as against 72 lbs. in Japan. That should give us an idea as to how far we can go in exploiting our marine resources and thereby helping in the solution of our food problem.

We seem to have accepted the fact that the food problem will always be with us. This need not be so. I have tried to indicate a number of measures which are quite feasible and which by themselves will help us wipe out the deficit. Our country even now produces about 80 million tonnes of food-grains. We had hoped that we would be able to raise this to 100 million tonnes by the end of the third plan. It looks, however, that we will be able to reach only 92 million tonnes. Our annual deficit is of the order of about five million tonnes against a production of 80 million tonnes. We need not get into a frame of mind where we accept that for such a country as ours, it is impossible to produce this extra five million tonnes or even more. It is a staggering fact that we lose many million tonnes a year owing to faulty storage, handling and transport. Surely it should be possible for us to cut down substantially on this waste and, even by that, we should be able to close the gap.

This is apart from what can be done through improved techniques on our fields and farms. There has long been a view that the Indian agriculturist is tradition-bound and will not take to new techniques easily. This has been proved to be false again and again. Land reform legislation has gone a long way in instilling a new faith in our cultivators. Community development and extension work have been familiarising them with new techniques and new tools of production. Our countryside is awake. It may soon be expected to gird its loins and take long strides. What we need at the moment is a catalyst which will help hasten this process. The graduates who are coming out of our universities, the specialist branches of our research institutions and the various departments of government engaged in this work will provide this catalyst. I am happy to know that the Shivaji University has realised its responsibilities in this regard and has already started a scheme of Gram Shikshas through which it seeks to acquaint our villagers with recent developments in agriculture, animal husbandry and small-scale industry. I am sure it can draw upon the enthusiasm of its staff and students in this national work. We can do among our people what has been achieved among rural communities in the U. S. A. through the agency of land grant colleges. There can be no greater work than this for your university to engage at the present moment.

I do not want to dwell long on the two other aspects which I mentioned above, small-scale industry and co-operation. Maharashtra has already offered to produce anything that our defence departments may entrust to it. The thriving small-scale industry in this region which has developed very fast in recent years on the basis of the agriculturists' needs can now diversify its production and turn to other spheres of activity. The university can be relied upon to help the entrepreneur in this process by way of field and cost studies. Co-operation is something unique to Maharashtra and has already drawn praise from other States. Many have come here to study its working and to adapt its pattern to their needs. We have the largest number of co-operative sugar factories in the country. The principle of co-operation is being applied successfully to other agro-economic industries. This form of organisation and its study will always remain an important part of your work here.

Yours is a young university and it will be the task of the present generation of its teachers and students to help lay down the pattern of its evolution, the area of its specialisation and the field wherein it will seek to serve the community. I have tried to share my ideas with you in this respect. I know that you will be doing your best in the years to come to make this a great centre of education and scholarship. May God guide the footsteps of this fledgeling univeresty and make it an agency for the progress of southern Maharashtra.

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