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for

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I am grateful to the authorities of the Shivaji University and especially to the Vice-Chancellor, my old friend and colleague Dr. A. G. Pawar, for inviting me to participate in this Convocation. I deem it a proud privilege to do so. I have always been interested in the history of Marathas, in the sublime life of Shivaji the Great and his great contribution to the restoration of India's dignity, in the history of this illustrious house of the Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur and in this historical city, which with its well-known temple of Mahalakshmi, is known as the Varanasi of the South. It is, in my opinion, most appropriate that an ancient city like this should become the headquarters of a modern university and thus perpetuate a tradition of learning which began here, with the settlement of Brahmपुरi on the banks of the Panchganga river, as early as a few centuries before the Christian era. Nor could any place have been more appropriately selected than this city for this tribute to the memory of Shivaji. By naming the University after Shivaji, you have not only given inspiration to its members but also imposed on them the responsibility to live up to the great name that is now their Alma Mater. I have no doubt that your graduates will remember this when they leave its portals to enter the larger world of life, and work.

I would like to share with you today some of my thoughts on the present situation in India with special reference to their relevance to the young men and women who are passing out of the University and entering the larger arena of Indian life and society.

I have already asked you to bear in mind the special responsibilities you bear because of your connection with the University that has been named after the great Shivaji. Shivaji stood for the development of the sentiment of Indian

nationality. Though a lifelong fighter against Moghul rule, he did not seek to discriminate between different religious communities and stood for what is now known as a secular State, which translated in Hindu terms, means no more than equal respect for all religions. एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति Shivaji also believed in and worked for a good and clean administration that would ensure justice to the poor and the lowly and work for their welfare. At the same time, he was no denigrator of the ancient culture and traditions of this country. He drew his strength from the best in the old and bent it to serve the cause of progress and mass-welfare in the present. Nationalism, secularism, mass-welfare, respect for human dignity and drawing the best from the old and sustaining it in the modern world, these were the values that Shivaji stood for and practised in his life. These are also the values, which we, who live in the India of to-day, stand for. All that Shivaji stood for is now a part of the national heritage and it is up to you, as residents of Maharashtra and graduates of the Shivaji University, to absorb his teachings, practise them in your own life and conduct, and set an example to youth in the rest of India.

A new wind of change is blowing over our country. As you are aware, it was at the Avadi Session of the Congress, that we adopted the goal of democratic socialism; and although we have been making some progress in that direction, several political and social workers have felt concern at the slow pace of change and are demanding more vigorous measures. The tremendous national response that met the nationalisation of banks under the leadership of the Prime Minister is a good index of this growing feeling and shows how impatient the public has become to secure rapid progress towards socialism. It is for us now to respond to this feeling and in doing so, direct it towards channels that will take us steadily, but peacefully, forward to the establishment of the new social order that we have all dreamt about all these years.

Socialism, in my opinion, does not only imply a massive expansion of the public sector, although the public sector will play an increasingly important role as we socialise the economy. Nor does socialism mean merely an enactment of egalitarian legislation, or a fiscal redistribution of incomes and property, although such legislation will be increasingly enacted and the disparities of income and property

are immeasurably better than those open to rural children or those coming from economically or socially handicapped backgrounds. Social and economic privilege thus gets opportunities for good education and through it tries to perpetuate and strengthen itself. This is the very negation of socialism. Instead, we must strive to create an educational system in which children belonging to the poorer sections of the community and hailing from the masses have an equal opportunity to get the benefits of secondary and higher education along with students belonging to the higher income groups and hailing from the classes. In other words, the society must so organise access to education that merit will always have an adequate opportunity to receive good secondary and higher education irrespective of the capacity to pay for the heavy costs involved. This necessarily implies a well-planned and comprehensive system of loan scholarships, which will cover, not only tuition fees, but also all expenses, including living expenses. The system will also have to be combined with a placement programme under which scholarship holders will be assisted to get admission into selected quality institutions. It is only through such a combined effort of scholarships and placement that talent will get the recognition it deserves irrespective of the social and economic level at which it is found. This is the essence of a socialistic system of education.

The third programme which I would like to emphasise is the change needed in the composition and character of our educated elite. At present our educated class- and I include in this all those, who are matriculates and above-forms a very small proportion of the total population, about two percent. It is composed mostly of persons drawn from urban areas or the higher social classes or the better-off economic groups. It has been educated predominantly in courses of liberal education without the needed emphasis on science and technology. It has also been brought up in a manner which makes it look down upon manual labour and often incapacitates it for meaningful participation in productive processes. Its ties with the masses are weak and the social distance between it and the people is often tending to increase. In a Socialist society, however, the educated class is quite different in composition, character and teaching and its relationship with the masses is close and intimate. To create such an Elite and build up a proper relationship between it and the people,

several important programmes will have to be developed. First, the facilities for education will have to be expanded, subject of course, to maintenance of adequate standards, so that the size of the Elite will not only be much larger but also be more capable of making an effective bid for modernisation and national progress with social justice. As I have said earlier, work-experience will have to be introduced at the primary stage and continued during the secondary stage also in order to inculcate the dignity of manual labour and to create the capacity to participate in productive processes. The composition of the elite will also have to be altered, through the programme of identification of talent and scholarship to which I have referred, so that it becomes representative of all social strata with a much larger representation of the weaker sections than is generally found at present. The medium of instruction will have to be changed to the languages of the people, but with the proviso about the need to study English as our most effective window on the world; and programmes of national service will have to be introduced so that the classes and the masses come closer together. In fact, what we need is an almost total metamorphosis of our educated classes so that they become, not a privileged and exploiting group, but a spearhead of a movement for national regeneration committed to the service of the nation and the masses. If we can bring about this change in the educated classes through the development of programmes of the type I have indicated, another step towards creating a socialistic educational system would have been taken.

Finally, I will go back to the point that I made in the beginning, namely, that socialism is essentially an attitude or a way of life, based upon certain values such as equality, social justice, recognition of the dignity of the individual and the realisation of the fact that the only moral, and indeed the only enduring method, to further one's own interest is through helping to promote the interest of society as a whole. The creation of this social awareness and the cultivation of such a sense of social responsibility is necessary to lay the moral and spiritual foundations of the socialism.

To my mind, no better formulation of the thesis of social responsibility has come down to us from our long past than what Sri Krishna told Arjuna in the

following immortal words :

इष्टान्भोगान्हे वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविता : ।

तर्दतानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव स : ॥

यज्ञशिष्टशियन : सन्तो युच्छन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषै : ।

भुअते त्वर्घ ते पापा ये पचन्त्यात्यकारणात् ॥

“ The Devas, cherished by Yajna, will give you desired-for objects, So, he who enjoys objects given by the Devas without offering (in return) to them, is verily a thief.

The good, eating the remnants of Yajna, are freed from all sins : but who cook food (only) for themselves, those sinful ones eat sin.”

Shorn of their contemporary allusion and interpreted in terms of their eternal truth, Sri Krishna’s advice to Arjuna was no more than a reminder to him of the thesis that all that he was and owned was but a contribution that society made it possible for him to be; and in turn it is his duty to return this obligation to society by working for its interest and treating his life and activity as an act of dedication and not that of personal aggrandisement.

Education must, therefore, strive to promote these values and attitudes. Curricula, text-books and other tools of education will have a role to play in this, no doubt. But as you are aware, the cultivation of values is more effectively done, not so much through syllabi or courses of study, as through the creation of a proper atmosphere in our educational institutions, through closer teacher-pupil contacts, through the precept and example set by the teachers and the adult community itself, and through co-curricular activities. I am afraid we have not stressed these elements adequately in our educational system so far. They should now have to be brought into their own to inculcate the basic attitudes essential for the creation of a socialistic society.

It must have been evident from some of the major points that I have placed before you so far that the reorientation of our educational system to socialistic goals is a complex and difficult task. It will need much larger investment of financial resources than we are making at present. This goes without question because no

country can have a good system of education without being prepared to pay adequately for it. But I am not sure that money alone will do the trick. Some of the significant things in education cannot be bought by money and can only be created through sustained and dedicated human effort, the effort of teachers, students, and educational administrators and, in the ultimate analysis of the public at large. Even the richest of nations will have to emphasise, and do emphasise, the basic role that human effort plays in educational reconstruction and this is all the more necessary in a country like ours where money is in short supply. We are now finding ourselves at the worst point of the vicious circle in which every developing nation is caught at some stage or the other, namely, it cannot provide good education in adequate quantity because it is poor and it continues to be poor because the quality of its human resources remains undeveloped for the failure to provide such education. The only way in which this vicious circle can be broken is through dedication, better planning, and greater human effort. Here lies the challenge to all of us, workers in the educational field and especially upon university teachers who are expected to give the lead to others. I hope and pray that we will all rise to the occasion and not fail our country at this supremely important moment in its history.

Friends, I do not propose to take any more of your time. But before I close, I will address a few words to the young men and women who have received their degrees and distinctions today.

Graduates of the year, I congratulate you on your achievements and offer you my warm felicitations. I trust that, by your life, work and example, you will prove yourselves worthy of this institution, named after Shivaji the Great. May God Almighty bless you with the strength, courage and the moral fervour to solve successfully the complex problems that are facing this country at the moment. Tomorrow is yours.

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