

***Justice Mohammed Hidayatullah,***

*Vice-President Of India*

*Dt. 15-12-1979*

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I feel highly honoured and gratified to be present with you today. Your University, although comparatively new, enjoys the revered name of Shivaji the great, one of the greatest leaders and soldiers of India. This is the first time I have visited Kolhapur, a town well-known in the history of India not only through its association with his name but also through its association with a Ruling Family. I am sorry that I am unable to address this august gathering in Marathi, although in my primary school I had Marathi as my second language and also during my practice at the Bar in Nagpur I was accustomed to read and understand Marathi documents. I must say, to my shame, that I have not kept up the acquaintance with the language. I understand Marathi but I am unable to speak it for want of practice. You will, therefore, forgive me if I depart from the customary language used in your University and speak to you in English. Perhaps, I might have attempted to speak to you in Hindi, but my Hindi is not much good and a mixture will perhaps fail to serve us as a vehicle of communication. There is thus no choice but to use English.

A University Convocation is a time for reflection. In so far as the students, who are passing out of the portals of the University, are concerned, it is a matter of great moment for them and time for reflection. Till now they were accustomed to do the bidding of their teachers and attend to their studies with a view to passing, and passing well if possible, the examinations for which they were due. From now onwards they will find their approach to life completely different. Most of them will have to rely upon what they have achieved in the University and will seek employment in some form or other, to earn a living. A University degree is only a hallmark. It does no more than give them a recognition of a particular kind. It does not, however, serve them in the struggle for existence. Success there depends upon various other factors such as, opportunity, aptitude and application. They will have to reorientate their lives and attitudes and suit them to the requirements of the tasks which they undertake. In all these, the discipline and the education which they have received will be their first asset. The rest will depend on them alone. To those who have done well in the examination and

have fulfilled their ambitions by securing the high places which they aimed at in the examination, I give my congratulations. To those who were not so fortunate I advise them that they should not be disheartened. The tasks before them will now be very different from preparation for an examination. They must also remember the lines of a poet, which I have often repeated to other students in similar circumstances and which I repeat for their benefit here-

Life's battles do not always go  
To the strongest or fastest man;  
Soon or late the man who wins  
Is the man who thinks he can.

Therefore, you must determine to make a success of your life and of the task which you will undertake and go with resolution and confidence for success.

The second thought which comes on this occasion is about such convocations themselves. These are ceremonies which mark the completion of a year of scholastic occupation on the part of the teachers and their pupils. Convocations also indicate in an indirect way the progress or excellence which has been achieved during the last year over the preceding years. In our country one of the most poignant circumstances to my mind, is the existence of certain shortcomings in our educational system in so far as Universities are concerned. We hear of batches and batches of students who achieve scholastic standards of a University year by year but who are unable to get proper employment in spite of their high education and attainments. We hear also of the advice that University education should be job-oriented. The problem is twofold. It is not only a question of job-orienting our education. It is a question of having jobs ready for the job-oriented people. There is a plethora of students who are good only for clerical or such other employment. There is also an over-production of technically educated youngmen who cannot get jobs and who cannot use their knowledge in job surroundings. They linger on for a long time in the hope of employment and as knowledge keeps advancing they get out of date before they are actually employed. There is also a disinclination on the part of students to acquire new knowledge additional to the curriculum and they do not continue in after life further studies to keep abreast of advancements in their own fields.

Again students in the Universities get diverted from their curricular activities by getting involved in the politics of the country. While I do not decry the interest which a student must necessarily take in the political wellbeing of our country, I

do feel that this interest, at the cost of their own scholastic time, is not proper. The first task of a student must obviously be to make the best use of his time in the University in the completion of his own education. If he fritters away that time he will be found to be behind when he enters life. Therefore, a little less of politics and a little more of studies is probably best for him. Unfortunately, the proportion today seems to be more politics and less studies. To a certain extent the teachers must also share the blame. The intimate relation which should exist between the teachers and their pupils is becoming less and less. In our days the teachers took interest not only in our studies but also in our extra curricular activities and games. Many of the institutions today cannot afford to have playing fields, gymnasiums and libraries. Extra curricular activities in universities have diminished considerably. The extra time which students have is not utilised either in mind building or body building activities, but is used for purposes for which the students are not properly cut out. It has been said quite correctly that an 'empty brain is the devil's workshop. If in the free hours they have not got something to fill their minds and time the students will naturally occupy themselves with things which they are not concerned with or in which they should not involve themselves.

Therefore, every university and every college must make an extra effort to secure for the students entertaining occupation after college hours are over. Healthy competition in games, attending at debates and elocution competition, extra reading and writing for prizes to be instituted, are some of the means to divert the attention of the students from undesirable activities and to canalise their effort and time in other productive channels. It was said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. The existence of playing fields, tournaments, debating societies and audiovisual equipment is a must for every educational institution in our country. Govern- ments must see to it that these are provided in every institution where young men and women are being educated. Teachers must involve themselves in these activities, take a leading part in them, associate with their students on equal terms so that friendliness, camaraderie and respect may grow between them.

In our days professors used to be present on the playing fields, played with the students and were ready with prizes in the shape of books, etc. for elocution and debating competition. In my college there used to be what were called Magic Lantern Shows which students, in rotation, conducted with a professor helping them. I remember lecturing to the students with the help of Professor Ganguli on the novels of Dickens. Prof. Ganguli would show slides from Oliver Twist, David

Copperfield and other novels and I told the story to the audience. The result was that every one wanted to get a chance and was given it. This made us read widely and we got better acquainted not only with the English language but also with the authors. I remember invitations being issued to hospitals to give lectures on diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and others, illustrated with magic lantern slides. The knowledge which we gathered then has helped us in our after life. All these things are not now practised at all.

A word before I finally close my address on the condition that we see today in our country. We see a lot of differences at certain level. But we also see the basic unity in India. We must realise that India is still a very united nation, united in its desires, in its objectives and in the goals which it hopes to achieve. It is divided only because of individuals who think that they are more capable of achieving the objects than others. Every one seems to think in the words of the song, " What you can do I can do better " It is not a question of our aims but of personalities. We are united in knowing and thinking what is good for our country. We are divided because we seem to have different groups who think that they alone are able to achieve the aims. It is more and more necessary that we should reduce our party factions and get more and more united. It is true that there are often many sides to a question and therefore some people will be found to accept one view rather than another. But that does not mean that we should break into a dozen parties which are entrenched against one another. There is much room for give and take for acceptance of common programme and execution by all parties in cooperation. If we can achieve a certain measure of agreement on vital issues irrespective of party politics we shall go much further amongst the comity of nations than we are doing today. The example of some of the countries in the world should caution us against moving in the wrong way. We have had, fortunately for us, happy times in the past. We have built up an attitude towards life and others which cannot be cavilled against. But our differences which are not vital to the wellbeing of the country seem to keep us divided. It is not necessary that we should widen the gulf by political motivation; rather we should try to bring people more and more together so that we can march together towards progress, which should be our share. We must remember that unity is strength and if we do not attain unity we shall lose strength both at home and abroad. With these words I conclude my address.

JAI HIND

