

Air Chief Marshal O. P. Mehra, PVSM,

Governor of Maharashtra & Chancellor,

Shivaji University.

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor, members of the Senate, Executive Council Faculties, distinguished guests and my young friends :

Consider it an honour and a great privilege to be invited to address this Convocation. Coming to Kolhapur, a city blessed by Goddess Mahalaxmi, is an equally great privilege for me.

Your University, the youngest among traditional Universities in Maharashtra, has the unique distinction of having been named after one of the great sons of India, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This places an enormous responsibility on all those who have the honour to be part and parcel of the University Be it students, teachers or administrators including the junior-most functionaries. The responsibility not only calls for academic excellence but envisages an obligation to live upto the great ideals of Shivaji in thoughts, words and above all deeds. The fruits of this dedication, nobility of character and sustained hard work will be the emergence of men and women possessing high moral values, academic excellence and, above all, a desire to serve the motherland as Shivaji Maharaj did. Such products of your University will become torch-bearers of social transformation and economic development befitting themselves and all those who come in contact with them.

Kolhapur has been closely connected with crucial political and social changes in Maharashtra. Having been a cultural and religious centre, over the years, it has made significant contributions to Indian art, music and drama. Its enlightened ruler Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was a social reformer and a great crusader for the rights of the backward and deprived classes. Apart from being an able administrator he was responsible for modernising agriculture and industry as also promoting education on modern lines. In fact he did everything for the development of the people of this region. Your University has inherited these traditions. Your aim should be to accelerate the processes of human development through education especially higher education. Development of “ man” is intimately related and dependent on sound education and all round character

building activities.

Today we are a free nation. This freedom has awakened the aspirations of our people for a better life. In order, therefore to make our political freedom more meaningful, it is necessary for us to obtain for all our people social and economic justice within the shortest possible time. Millions of our people are still steeped in poverty, illiteracy, ill health and all the evils that flow from them. At the other end of the scale, there are those who are vulgarly affluent leading a life of ease and comfort unmindful of the miseries of the deprived and the underprivileged. Our immediate task is to ameliorate the conditions of the | underprivileged, the disadvantaged and the deprived of our society. This calls for a rapid increase in production through increased savings and investment, better planning, development and hard work. Simultaneously, there should be an emphasis on distributive justice amongst the different social groups, greater attention to the needs of the weaker sections of the society and increased efforts to improve their living conditions. While much has been achieved in both these areas, we still have a very long way to go to achieve the objective of eradicating poverty and establishing a more egalitarian society. Who else is better suited to perform this task than our educated youth destined to be the future leaders of India ? Our temples of learning—the universities — are the nurseries from which such enlightened leadership has to emerge. It won't grow as mushrooms without effort. Those with aspirations amongst you have to earn such positions through, imbibing scholarship, un-impeachable character and above all dedication as also devotion to causes which we all hold dear, nay sacred.

One of the means of accelerating the process of development is the spread of education to the masses on right lines. Democratisation of access to education is a very desirable goal. It is by no means the ultimate. We have to lay greater stress on improvement of the quality of education enveloping all aspects and all sections of our people.

To make good the accumulated neglect there, must be a conscious effort to improve the quality of education imparted to the weaker sections of the community and our rural population. Where necessary, we should introduce academic reforms which will ensure that education becomes relevant to the needs of the learners and the environment in which it is imparted. Remedial and enrichment programmes must be available to ensure that first generation learners and weaker students are adequately helped. The test of a good educational system is not so much its ability to impart education to the talented or above average

students but its capacity to bring up the relatively weak and backward students to the desired levels which in this age of fierce competition must be high; high not in the percentage of marks attained through dilution of standards but in content.

There is no denying the fact that good University education is a powerful tool of national development as it provides the right kind of leadership. To be successful, it must be instrumental in developing competent men and women responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community to man various professions and positions of trust and responsibility.

On the other hand, if the quality of higher education is poor, it can lead a community to social, economic and moral disorganisation and decay.

The quality of higher education is, therefore, of vital significance. This quality in its turn depends to a great extent on the teachers. To improve standards in higher education, the teachers must cultivate an idealism which would include a passionate love of learning, an indefatigable pursuit of excellence, a commitment to professional codes of conduct and a continuing and deep concern for the welfare of the students committed to their care. Our educational system can only serve as an instrument of change to meet the needs and aspirations of our people as a nation, if our teachers and students accept a commitment to honour such accepted national goals, as democracy, secularism and socialism. Our teachers, as a body, should be committed to these and other value systems which are our sacred heritage. Without this commitment on the part of our teachers and students, it will not be possible to bring about the desired reforms in higher education or to use it as a vehicle for the onward march that we all passionately desire.

Higher education is not merely reading and cramming a few books or selected portions of books and obtaining a degree. It is not stuffing the brain temporarily but training the same for lasting effect and thirst for knowledge. University education must awaken curiosity, promote self-study habits, sharpen intellectual faculties, develop problem solving abilities, inculcate values and attitudes which commit youngmen and women to humanism, pursuit of truth and excellence, freedom, equality, justice and mutual interdependence of the individual and the society. In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru” A University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives “. These words highlight the basic truth that Universities

have a crucial role to play in the life, well being and strength of the nation.

In the rapidly changing contemporary world, universities are undergoing a profound change in their scope, functions and organisations and are in the process of rapid evolution. Their tasks are no longer confined to the traditional functions of merely teaching and examining. While they are assuming new functions the older ones are increasing in range, depth and complexity. We have to keep pace with this change if we are not to be left out of the race.

Character Building, including the inculcation of a sense of social responsibility, has always been regarded as the most fundamental and essential educational goal. Even the goal of economic growth cannot be achieved fully or satisfactorily unless and until a majority of the men and women who are in industries or professions, who look after our offices or establishments, or who work in the fields and the factories, are endowed with a strong moral fibre. Character Building gains greater importance particularly today when the country seems to be caught in a crisis of character. In almost every walk of life we find that there is a glaring gap between the professions and practice of people. Ends and not means have assumed a place of pride . This is a pity as we are a people who boast of an heritage which shunned such an approach in dealing with individual, collective and national issues. It is only through a concerted programme of character Building through sound education that we can hope to prepare a generation of people with character and courage to resist with strength and determination, the ugly tendencies and unethical practices which are in evidence today.

It is a fact recognised the world over that teachers hold the key to character building of students committed to their care. What we need today in higher education is an adequate supply of competent and able teachers devoted to their profession who I are a source of strength and inspiration to their students. They have to be men and women who are attuned to great ideals, and whose magnetism will do more good than all our textbooks and all our examinations; men and women who will impress upon the minds of the young students, that life is larger than livelihood, that the end of education is not gains in silver and gold, fame and power, but service and sacrifice. Such teachers are the real architects of our future. The work they do and the effect it has on future generations is rewarding and of an enduring nature. This they can achieve only through personal example. Their personal lives and actions have to be their silent message to their wards. Teachers at all levels, and especially at the

university level, are very advantageously placed in providing the necessary social and moral leadership to society. Their moral authority and commitment to ideals make them natural agents in shaping the destinies of the coming generations. However, one cannot but feel that the teaching community as a whole in the country has not been able to exercise its moral and social authority adequately. Indeed, it is a matter of regret that there is hardly any movement of teachers in the country effective enough to ensure this. Despite the very large number of educational institutions and the outstanding talents that they have produced, there is little evidence of the teaching community influencing the course of events even in the spheres of education, let alone in relation to the national scene. To discharge this function properly the university teachers should cultivate not only intellectual integrity, courage and scientific knowledge but also win confidence of the public and more so of those entrusted to their care. Then only will they be able to exercise a sobering influence on the course of events outside the campuses of universities instead of outside events influencing or disrupting the peaceful academic life. Today, university teaching is done mainly in the form of lecturing and that too within the limits of the prescribed syllabi. This may be good from the point of view of passing an examination if that is what we deem as the aim of higher education. This, however, does not encourage self study, arouse the student's curiosity to look beyond the text-books or stimulate his intellectual faculties. We have given a lot of attention to improving the system of higher education. Unfortunately, little or no thought has been given as to how best teaching ought to be done at our universities. The present day teaching leaves no scope for creativity and, consequently, it is quite inadequate to meet the challenge of the times and changing dimensions of modern knowledge. Teaching techniques remaining almost primitive the teachers' major anxiety naturally is to complete the syllabus somehow and that too with a 20 hour academic week. It is necessary that teaching should aim at imparting strategies of learning. Student's own initiative to learn must be fostered and encouraged during the course of his education. The student has to be taught to explore the field of study on his own after he is given the necessary directions and guidance. Thereafter, day-to-day discussions will help in clearing various issues with which he is not in a position to come to grips. This pattern of education has practically disappeared from our universities. Its restoration is vital and so is the idea of prolonged academic weeks certainly not shorter than about 40 hours of effort per week. The advantages of such a change are obvious—the students would be seeking knowledge and by

being busy for a major part of the day would remain aloof from undesirable and disturbing influences. I would even recommend that every university should have a teacher education department with its teachers as students. Its central task should be to provide them with a sense of purpose and with a philosophy of education. This ultimately means developing teachers' ability and desire to think seriously, deeply and constantly. All said and done, teachers can't be effective unless they continue to keep abreast of developments in their own fields of specialisation and this is not possible except through a continuous effort to learn. Indeed, members of faculties cannot touch the lives of their students unless their own lives have been touched; unless their own conception of education is reflected in the way they teach as well as in what they teach. Although it is unreasonable to expect every educator to be an inspiring teacher, let alone an inspiring human being, yet a serious attempt should be made to help teachers grow in ideas. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, I quote : " We have not all the same gifts, but what is vital is not whether we are endowed with five talents or only one but how faithfully we have employed the trust committed to us. We must play our part manfully, be it great or small. Goodness denotes perfection of quality. However distasteful one's duty may be, one must be faithful to it even unto death ".

As I have mentioned earlier we are committed to the goal of secularism. It is of paramount importance that our teachers and more so the students realise that different religions are but different and alternative paths that lead to the same goal. It is respect for all religions and mutual respect for the different religions that constitutes the essence of secularism. Acceptance of secularism implies that we respect each other's faith, tolerate the differences in their beliefs and accept the fundamental fraternity of all human beings. Our economic growth, political stability, social cohesion and national interests, all demand that we accept secularism and practise it as a way of life. Our universities have an important role to play in promoting secular attitudes among our students. The function of the university is not merely to produce technically skilled and professionally competent men and women but to produce in them the basic human qualities which enable individuals to treat one another in a democratic spirit. Mere acquisition of knowledge without the development of qualities of tolerance, compassion and mutual respect is of no value. No university can regard itself as serving its real purpose unless it sends out young men and women who are not only learned but whose hearts are full of values which we ought to cherish, among them being,

love and compassion for humanity. The importance of education lies not merely in imbibing knowledge and skill but in being able to live in harmony with others. Another important aspect which needs to be emphasised in our education is the link between the worlds of education and work. The adoption of productive work into the educational process as a means of enhancing the value of training and providing a proper preparation for working life are of great significance to us. Work-based education which will encourage earning while learning and which will be of service to the community must permeate the educational system at all levels. Apart from giving the needy students finances which they can utilise for meeting part of the expenses of their studies, it would teach them the dignity of labour — a very desirable feature in our country. Students who are beneficiaries of this scheme, I am sure, would be able to face life with courage and self-confidence.

One of the disturbing features that has been plaguing the universities over the last few years has been the inordinate delay in the conduct of examinations causing considerable misery to the students and jeopardising their careers and future. The unfortunate fact is that in some cases, students are a party, nay active participants, in creating situations which adversely affect their academic studies. Whatever may be the causes leading to this disturbing situations, they should be fully analysed and solutions arrived at through a meaningful dialogue between the university administration, teaching and non-teaching staffs and the students so that none of them strays from his/her objectives and obligations. We should not do anything which would even remotely affect the future of our students and in turn our national interests. It is our duty to subjugate our personal and sectarian interests to the wider national interests. Let us create an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence and collectively strive for giving a clean and efficient administration, the absence of which will negate everything that the universities stand for.

In many universities the actual number of working days during a session is far less than the stipulated 180 days. As a result, many of the facilities created at considerable cost to the public exchequer, remain unused or under utilised. The paradox of the Indian situation is that while on the one hand we are faced with the problem of providing facilities for higher education to many more deserving students, on the other hand the infrastructure created for higher education at considerable cost is not properly or fully utilised resulting in huge

wastage of our national resources. Unless we remedy this situation we cannot expect a reasonable return on our heavy investments on higher education.

It is not given to all to go in for university education. The few years that you are privileged to spend in a college or a university are the golden period of your life. You have the option either to spend this time wisely or fritter it away in futile or disruptive pursuits. If you use every moment of your academic life to equip yourselves physically, intellectually and morally for the life ahead you will have the satisfaction of having spent your time most rewardingly. This would better equip you to serve your Motherland efficiently and effectively in your chosen field. On the other hand, if you waste your precious years in pursuits other than academic, you will neither gain in stature nor will you be equipped to serve your fellow human beings or your country. This is the greatest disservice that you can do to yourself and more so to the society.

It is the duty of every educated man to extend a helping hand to as many as he can, to meet them in a spirit of sympathy and service, to look into their difficulties and problems and solve them to the best of his ability. A proverb says: " If you give a man a fish, he can eat it once; if you teach him to fish, he can eat fish for his life time ". Even in the context of our country's present stage of development millions of our people are denied the benefit of education. Those of you who are fortunate in having the benefit of higher education should help their less fortunate brethren having no formal education by imparting knowledge to them. This exercise will increase their knowledge and skills which in turn will make their life more meaningful and rewarding. I urge each one of you to lend a helping hand in this constructive work?

I do hope that; in, whatever you do you will always be guided by "a" spirit of selfless service to others as reflected in the following inspiring lines by John Wesley :

“ Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can

CONVOCATION ADDRESSES

To you my young friends, the recipients of academic degrees and distinctions, I offer heartiest congratulations and my personal felicitations. You have just crossed an important land mark in your life and entered another which promises to be the more challenging phase of your life. Your success in life is to be measured not so much by the position that you will achieve as by the obstacles which you will overcome while trying to succeed. I am sure that the education and training that you have received in this University would enable you to meet the many challenges of life bravely and succeed in the adventure of life.

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