

Hon'ble Justice P. N. Bhagwati

Chief Justice of India (Retd.)

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Your Excellency the Chancellor, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Executive Council and the Senate, Members of the Faculties, Ladies and Gentlemen and my young friends,

I consider it a great honour to have been invited to deliver the Convocation Address this morning to honour graduates who would soon be entering the world after completing their education. I have always felt that the enthusiasm of youth is infectious : it makes the old feel young and the young feel younger still and hence whenever I get an opportunity of meeting the youth, I never miss the opportunity. I have always believed, and this has been my firm conviction, that Judges must not remain aloof from the mainstream of life. Their mode of appointment is different from that of the Legislature or the Executive, but their accountability to the people is the same. They do not stand in splendid isolation or live in ivory towers. The tides and currents which engulf the rest of men do not pass the Judges by. They must be in tune with the social philosophy embodied in the Constitution and they must have a sense of social awareness and public commitment. It is for this reason that whenever I get an Opportunity of participating in some activity of public life, I readily accept it. Of course, now that I have relinquished the office of Chief Justice of India, I am a much freer man and I have now time to pursue my all-consuming interest in education. I personally attach the highest importance to education because to my mind the entire future of our country, its growth and development-social, economic and political - depends on the nature and quality of education imparted to the youth. There was a time during the freedom movement when our political leaders used to go to the educational institutions and motivate and inspire the students, but unfortunately today our students are neglected; often they are used merely as pawns in the political game. It is, therefore, essential that those who have dedicated their lives to the service of the people and who have actualised the values of *Tyaga* and *Seva*, renunciation and service, in their own lives must be invited to the educational institutions and the students must be exposed to their influence rather than be led away by partisan politics.

I am proud to be here this morning because your University is situated in

a famous place. The city of Kolhapur has always been a place of importance from time immemorial. It was in the ancient days known as Karveer. It is famous for its Mahalakshmi Temple and because of its religious significance, it has often been described as the *Kashi* of the South and has attracted devotees from far off places.. , It has also had in the past progressive and enlightened rulers who paid the greatest attention to advancement of education and set up a number of educational facilities to the socially and economically backward classes of people. Your University, is comparatively a new University since it has been in existence now for only a little over 20 , years, but even so it has established high prestige and reputation for itself as a centre of learning and scholarship... It caters to the needs of 4 districts of Western Maharashtra and there are about 66,000 students receiving the benefit of education in the colleges affiliated to your University. I am indeed thankful to the Vice-Chancellor and the members of the Executive Council for inviting me to deliver the Convocation Address this morning,

I am pained to find that, unfortunately, in our country today our sense of values has become somewhat distorted. The academicians do not get that place of honour and prestige which they should occupy in any healthy civilised society. There was a time in our country when learning and scholarship were valued highly and respected profoundly. The profession of teaching was a highly respected profession and all sections of the society held it in great esteem. The teacher was looked upon as a *guru* and he came only after the parents in respect and veneration. So high was the place accorded to learning and scholarship that Pt. Jagannath said in his “Bhamini Vilas’

This represented the general approach of every one in the country. But since the last two or three decades our values have undergone drastic change and men of learning and scholarship do not enjoy the position and respect which they used to do before and profession has entirely lost its due place in the scheme of things,** social as well as cultural. There is greater respect for political power and wealth than for academic values.- This is an unhealthy state of affairs and unless our people learn to develop a proper sense of values, the future of our country does not promise to be hopeful and encouraging. This can be achieved only if our younger, generation is actuated by a sense of dedication and a burning desire to pursue the path of learning and scholarship. It should not,be- difficult for our younger generation to do so since our/entire cultural tradition is built on the foundation of *tyaga* and *seva* and these are virtues which have been preached to us by our great men from time immemorial. We have

always believed that “tyaga” that is,, renunciation and not “bhoga” that is, pleasure-seeking, should be the motivating forc for our actions. One of our Upanishads says :

न ध्यानेन न प्रजया त्यागेनैव अमृतत्वमनशु :। :

“Not by meditation, nor by prosperity but by renunciation alone we can attain immortality”. But what does this renunciation mean? It does not mean that you must give up the world and go and live in a forest or cave. Our culture does not preach an escapist philosophy. It is not negative in its approach. It is full of positive dynamism. It has, as always, acted as a great stimulus to full and complete development of all facets of life. That is why when we look at the past history of India, we find her stupenduous vitality, her inexhaustible power and joy of life and her absolute prolific creativeness in all fields of human endeavour. Look at our famous temples. What exquisite architecture and culture we find etched in stone depicting richness of life. We have, throughout history distinguished ourselves in ‘fine arts, music, dance and literature. It-is symbolic of the stupenduous vitality imparted to us by our culture that Upanishads address; men as अमृतस्य पुत्राः। “children of immortality.” The renunciation which our Upnishads speak of is no renunciation of work but renunciation of attachment. Work we must, or else the social and economic order-will collapse. But work must be done without attachment in a spirit of dedication. What is, therefore, required of -us is not work-renunciation, but self-renunciation, renunciation of our little self, of our ego manifestation of the higher self in us and the positive expression of this-tyagwis seva or service. We must rise abbve our little ego and express our-true self, the self that realises its oneness with all and gives itself away to all-in love and service. These have; been the eternal values which-have-inspired-us through; the agesand these values have sustained us over the last five thousand years when other civilizations and cultures have perishedlong ago and now live only in the pages of history or the archives of the museum. That is why Swami Vivekanand said, as far back as 1897 on his Return to India from the west . “The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming, corpse appears to be awaking India, this mother-land of ours...from her long deep sleep. None can, resist. her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet. These were the prophetic words of the great wami. But for the i timebeing they seem to have become

unreal. The great values that we cherished in the past unfortunately appear to have been submerged by self-centredness, self aggrandizement, greed for wealth and power and exploitation. It appears that since independence we have cared more to exploit our newly won freedom for selfish purposes than to serve its cause or enhance its value. We seem to have developed a mood of complacency, an inordinate love of money, ease and comfort, and a suicidal tendency to indulge in narrow parochial interests and petty issues. We have been indulging, in the name of democracy and under the guise of promoting it, in every conceivable form of indiscipline, on grounds of individual or group in regard to the national interest. We have not learned the lesson, that self discipline, and tolerance are essential in a democratic way of life and that desired changes are to be brought about by democratic and constitutional means not by agitations and violence.; No doubt some of these lessons are being learnt into our souls today and we are beginning to realise that can nation forward with discipline and character. but that is most necessary to impress us all is that more than ever before, we need to inspire ourselves with the twin ideals of *tyaga* and *seva*. We cannot build this great country, we cannot destroy its backwardness and make of it a truly progressive and enlightened country unless our people are once again imbued with the spirit of renunciation and service. We have before us the great example- of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. He rekindled in us; these great values of renunciation and service; and, through them he brought us our freedom now having secured our freedom' we must not forget these values; The best of human achievements; proceed from us when we think least of ourselves' " He that findeth his life shall lose it", say Jesus, " and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." This has been the teaching of the great masters throughout history, and I would earnestly appeal to you, my young friends, to bear this teaching in mind and dedicate yourselves to the service of the country in fullest measure. Whether you have little ability or great ability, or you have own talent is not of much importance. What you do with what you have is what counts. There is joy in being wedded to something greater than yourself. It is divine to be gripped by higher loyalties. The secret of an integrated life is to choose a cause that commands the best in you, something that you believe with all your heart and then to give yourself up to that cause with all your mind and strength. That is what I would like you to do-to submerge your little ego, to subordinate your personal interest and surrender yourself to the

cause of India's millions.

There are four types of individuals described by Bhartrha in the following words in his Nitisataka :

एते सत्पुरूषाः परार्थघटका स्वार्थीन् परित्यज्य ये ।
सामान्यास्तु परार्थमुद्यमभूतः स्वार्थीविरोधेन ये ॥
तेमी मानुष राक्षसाः परहितं स्वार्थाय निघ्नन्ति ये ।
ये निघ्नन्ति निरकर्त्तक परहितं ने के न जानीमहे ॥:

The first type, those who practise the, ethics of self-effacement and universal love, of renunciation and service, constitutes a small minority in any society; they are those who seek death so that others may live and thrive. The majority of people, the सामान्या, the generality however, belong to the second type, namely, those who practise the ethics of what modern political philosophy calls : enlightened self-interest. To the third tyap belong all these who indulge in all kinds of anti-social practices, practices inherilted from past ages and practices newly invented in this age, such as bribery, corruption, food and frug adulteration and so forth. These are described by the poet as मानुष राक्षसाः. The fourth and last category is the poet's despair. It is a class entirely unethical, and happliy a mnorty in any society, given to wanton anti-social violence and destruction. We find that unfortunately today the third and the fourth types of people are increasng in numbers and are dominating the social and economic scene. That poses a challenge to our education and religion, our political and social life. This challenge has to be met by us by mobilising all the efhical and in this task the young men and women of our country have to play a very important part. You will soon enter the mainstream of the active life of the nation and, there, occasions will arise when you will be faced with situations which will test to what type of bharthari's category you belong. It will be very easy to succumb to the temptations of self-interset, and by practising self-deception, what is called आत्मवचना you will even be able to find reasons to justify what you wish to do. But you will have to be constantly on your guard lest the anti-social practices of bribery,corruption, nepotism, black- marketing, dowry etc. overpower you and make you their slave. If you slide into these anti-social practices, you will not only harm yourself but also cause immense injury to the nation. Do not forget that you are a part of the nation and whatever you do is bound to reflect on national interest. If you resort.to these anti-social practices, you will weaken the fabric of the nation and corrode its vitality and strength. Please therefore, try to

see that you do not become **मानुष राक्षसाः**: That is a type which must be severely thinned, if not eliminated. You may pursue the path of enlightened self-interest which is a path of the second type of individuals, but try to inject more enlightenment into your self-interest so that you live more and more for others and less and less for yourself

My young friends, ours is a very poor country. There are millions of people in our country who are living in conditions of abject poverty. They have hardly any food to eat, any clothes to wear or any shelter over their head. They are living a sub-human existence. When I think of these starving millions of our country-men, I ask myself in tears : when will their misery end; when will their suffering cease; when shall we see a smile on their hollow cheeks and sunken eyes. There is an urgent necessity for everyone of us to dedicate ourselves to the task of service of these poor down-trodden masses.

Let me close by recalling the words of that great visionary and builder of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru :

“ The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

