

**Dr. Karan Singh**

*Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)*

*January, 1998*

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Chancellor of the University my good friend and colleague Dr. R C. Alexander, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dhanagare, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof. N. B. Patil, Deans, members of the Management Council and the Academic Council, Faculty, staff and students of the Shivaji University, Kolhapur, distinguished citizens of this historic town, representatives of the press and electronic media, and friends. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to revisit Kolhapur after over a quarter of a century. I came here in one of my previous incarnations as Minister for Tourism. I have had many incarnations in this very life, and I remember that I came to inaugurate a hotel. I also spoke at the University here in a hall, and the one thing I remember, about that address, Mr. Chancellor, was that the doors were closed and everybody was banging on the doors from outside wanting to get in. So I am glad that today we do not have that problem we have a beautiful pandal.

It is really a pleasure for me to visit this University named after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, one of the great figures in Indian history, a symbol of valour and patriotism and the fight against tyranny and repression. Maharashtra has indeed produced, down through the centuries, a whole galaxy of saints and scholars, soldiers and statesman, and has made a very noble contribution to the vast and multi-faceted mosaic that is India. This University was inaugurated by one of the great teachers of our times, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, and by my dear friend and colleague, the late Shri Yashwantrao Chavan. I have great honour in paying my tribute to both these outstanding individuals.

Also today I had Darshan of Mahalakshmi. Coming to the University I was in any case going to pay my homage to Mahasaraswati, but in this age of market economy, Mahalakshmi is equally important. So I thought that before I get on with my address, I would offer up a short prayer to Mahalakshmi which describes the great Goddess seated upon a huge lotus. The lotus, as you know, is born in the dirt and the muck of the underworld, but comes up clear and glittering. And she is seated on it richly caparisoned, bejewelled. She is full-breasted and deep-navelled, because she is the world-mother. She is Gaia, Bhavani Vasundhara, and she is being bathed on either side by six-tusked elephants who are pouring ambrosia or amrita over her from golden jars. May that great Goddess bestow her blessings upon all of us.

या सा पद्यासनस्था विपुलकटितटी पद्यपत्रायताक्षी ।  
गंभीरावर्तनाभिस्तनभरनयिता शुभ्रवस्त्रोत्तरीया ।  
लक्ष्मीर्दिव्यैर्गजेद्रैर्यणिखचितै स्नापिता हेम कुंभे ।  
नित्यं सा पद्यहस्ता तव वसतु गृहे सर्वामांगल्ययुक्ता ।

Mr. Chancellor, when I was considering the theme for my address, I decided that instead of giving advice to graduates and ostgraduates, which in any case now comes very easily to everybody, I would pose a series of questions regarding education, irected not only at the new graduates but at all who are in one way r the other involved in the educational process. As the UNESCO leport, of which I was a member, clearly recognizes, the human lersonality as a multifaceted and many dimensional entity, and ducation in its broadest sense must take cognisance of all of these limensions. We stand today poised on the threshold of the global ociety, and we must equip ourselves fully to meet the challenges tiat lie ahead. We can do this only if the many dimensions of the luman personality are fully developed, and surely that is what ducation is all about.

My first question is, has your education helped you to develop 'our physical strength ? शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् The shastra tells us hat the basis of all achievement is the human body. We need nuscles of iron and nerves of steel, as Swami Vivekananda used to ;ay, to build a new India. It is not an easy task to build a great lation. And for that, has your education taught you proper eating labits? Has it taught you to avoid poisoning your bodies with ilcohol, with tobacco or with drugs? Has it taught you to strive awards excellence? We have given up the old tradition of the \khadas and of Yoga. I went to China quite recently and in Beijing 3very morning many thousands of people get up and practice Tai 3hi which is a sort of slow motion Yoga. But I find that our own :ountry is losing the quest for physical excellence. We do not teach Dur young people how to sit properly, how to breath properly, how to :arry themselves properly. I am happy that your University is doing well in sports, but I would like to point out to the young graduates that listening to a cricket commentary is not an alternative for sports. I find a lot of young people now - a- days who call themselves sportsmen are glued to the radio or to the television when all these matches are going on. But that does not help them build their own bodies, except perhaps it might damage their hearing. You have to do something yourselves, wherever you are. You do not need expensive gymnesia to be fit. For Yoga you do not even need clothes. You can do it in your own home. But please remember, the body is the basis of

achievement. The body is the most superb instrument given to us by the evolutionary process, it is something that should be nurtured and should be tuned to perfection. So that is the first element of our education system, the strength of the body.

The second question is, has your education developed your intellectual capacities, not merely to study what is in your curriculum, but the capacity to learn? Please remember, learning now is a lifelong occupation. The old idea that you first did your education and then you went into life is obsolete. It is now accepted that the learning process begins even before birth. It is now being accepted that even a child in the womb can respond creatively to rhythms and harmonies, and education continues right up to the very last day of one's life on earth. आ नो भद्राः कृतवो यन्तु विश्वतः fecici: Let noble thoughts and ideas come to us from every side. We are living in an age of exploding technology and knowledge. Man has reached the moon, the planets and is reaching out to the stars. New dimensions of knowledge are being added everyday to the corpus of human wisdom. Do you have the capacity to constantly learn in all these many fields? There was a time when India was in the forefront of learning, whether it was in Mathematics or Astronomy, Medicine, or Engineering. There was an article in the current issue of India Today on the Indus Valley Civilization and the extraordinary architecture and town planning that went into those cities. Why is it that we are lagging behind in new knowledge? Why is it that we have lost the capacity to creatively lead the world intellectual community? We have a long and unbroken tradition of intellectual activity going back to the very dawn of our history. We have to recapture that sense of excitement and adventure. Living as we are in a moment of great transition and turmoil for the human race the second element of our education is the intellectual capacity to learn.

The third question is, has your education helped to develop your emotional maturity? Life today is full of stress-interpersonal, professional, family stress. The pace of life has increased exponentially. We are consistently underestimating the importance of the emotional factor in education. The growth of neurosis, violence and crime in our country is directly linked to the increasing emotional imbalance among large sections of the people. We are simply unable to cope with the stresses and strains of the new situation. This is an area which is very seldom referred to, far less addressed. The great philosopher Karl Gustav Jung said that in this age the task of humanity is to integrate the shadow. Where is the darkest shadow? Against the brightest light. The light of hyper-consumerism of ultra-promiscuity,

of horror and violence that is sweeping across our world casts its malign shadow deep within us. To confront this, emotional maturity is of great importance. I am particularly happy to see so many women graduates here because there is an imbalance in our educational system which has been male-dominated and male-oriented. And yet we see today in almost every University, the feminine aspect is once again rising to take its rightful place in the nation. This is a matter of great satisfaction and as we move onwards into the global society we cannot afford to neglect the deep emotional and psychological aspects that lie behind many of the problems and violence that we see in the world today. And education has, in some way or the other, to address these problems.

Fourthly, has your education developed in you an aesthetic sensibility, a perception of beauty? I am not here talking in elitist terms. I am talking of the beauty that you can see in a flower, or in the starry heavens at night, in the glory of a sunrise, or the sadness of a sunset. Have we tuned our minds to see the beauty around us, or do we simply spend our lives skimming over the surface of consciousness without once stopping to look around ? सत्य शिवं सुन्दरम्

Truth, auspiciousness and beauty are the keynotes of Indian civilization. We seem to have lost the capacity to respond creatively, whether it is to music, or to art or to painting, or whether it is the simple joys of every-day life. This aesthetic dimension of our consciousness, again, is something which remains gravely neglected. It is either dismissed as being elitist, or it is overlooked as being of no importance. But in fact one of the special features that distinguishes the human race from other species on this planet is the capacity to be aware of beauty, to create beauty, to respond to beauty. As Sri Aurobindo says in one of his memorable poems, "All music is only the sound of His laughter, all beauty the smile of His passionate bliss". There is a divinity that surrounds us if only we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Maharashtra has a very rich tradition of music, as we were coming in the procession, the great work of Sant Dnyaneshwar was being recited. Maharashtra has produced so many saints and singers and so many great scholars. I hope that the Universities of Maharashtra will make a special attempt to deepen this aesthetic awareness, so that the students who emerge from here have this capacity throughout their lives to respond to harmony, to respond to beauty and to try in their own lives in however small a way to sweeten the bitter ocean of 'Sansara'.

The fifth question - I have, talked of physical education, of intellectual education, of the capacity to perceive beauty, of the importance of emotional

maturity and balance - 'सङ्कल्पः', I come now to the question, has your education taught you socially desirable virtue of compassion and helpfulness, of punctuality and cleanliness, of team-work and co-ordination, of discipline and dedication? Unless we are able to absorb these socially desirable values, we will never become great as a nation. There has been no dearth, Mr. Chancellor, of great individuals in India. We produced the greatest figures in astronomy, in medicine, in mathematics, artists, and in virtually all walks of life. Our weakness has been the lack of social cohesion. The ऋग्वेद gives us two goals of life - आत्मनो मोक्षार्थम् जगहिताय च', we must work for the liberation of our own souls but also must pay our debt to society. How is it that countries like Germany and Japan which were totally destroyed in the world war II, have today become the leading nations in their respective continents. Their philosophy is not older than ours, their scholarship is not deeper than ours, their history is not longer than ours. They have the capacity for team-work and discipline and this is what we need, along with a coherent value system.

अध्यक्ष महोदय, और साथियों, हमारे मूल्योंका वैपरीत्य हो गया है। हमारे मूल्य क्या है हमारा राष्ट्रीय वाक्य है सत्यमेव जयते । मुन्डक उपनिषद् का वाक्य है सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम्- मगर आज हम क्या देख रहे.. अनृतमेव जयते न तु सत्यम्। संसद् भवन के मुख्य द्वारपर एक वाक्य लिखा हुआ है अयं निजः परो वेति गणाना लघुचेतसाम्। उदारचरिताना तु वसुधैव कुटूंबकम्। सारा संसार एक परिवार है । लेखिन आज हम क्या देख रहे है हम ऋषि मुनियोंकी संतान है। हम महावीर और बुद्धके देश के है, अशोक और महात्मा गांधिके देश के। आज हम देख रहे है घर घर में, गांव गांव में हिंसा भडक रही है। तो अहिंसा परमो धर्म के बजाए ये हिंसा परमो कर्म हो गया ही । ऐसे ही बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय च जनता के हित के लिये काम करो। की जगह के हम देख रहे है स्वजन सुखाय स्वजन हिताय च अपने ही जनो के लिये कार्य करो। ये वैपरीत्य जो है इससे हमारा देश खतरे में पड गया है।

I do not fear any external aggression on India. We are strong enough. After many centuries we have emerged as a sovereign republic, we can safeguard our sovereignty from external aggression. But can we safeguard it form internal erosion? Can we safeguard it when our moral values are deteriorating around us? And here I am not blaming any particular class of our citizens. It is fashionable now only to blame the politicians, and certainly the politicians have much to answer for. But this is a much deeper malaise that has eaten like an acid into the heart and roots of our society. For twenty years now some of us have been warning the nation that if corruption is allowed to continue like this, it will not only become a danger to our economy but a danger to our polity also. And today we have reached the stage when it appears that

India, which Swami Vivekananda said would be the Guru of nations, and Sri

Aurobindo said, “India is rising not when she rises to trample upon the weak, but to shed the light on the eternal Dharma that she has nurtured in her breast” is herself groping in the darkness. How can we shed any light to anybody else if in our own country we are like the blind being led by the blind.

And this brings me to my final point—Has your education developed in you your spiritual centre? In the ultimate analysis, human life itself is a quest towards spiritual maturity and realization. As Francis Thompson in one of his great poems says,

“Not where the wheeling systems darken  
And our benumbed conceiving soars,  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors,  
The angels keep their ancient places,  
Turn but a stone and start a wing  
Tis ye, tis your estrenged faces  
That miss the many splendoured thing”.

The many splendoured light of the ‘Atman’. The light that lighteth everyman that cometh into the world<sup>1</sup> as the Bible says, The ‘ruhani noor’ of the Sufis, the ‘Ek onkar’<sup>1</sup> of the Gurus, the light of the Atman.

वेदाहर्मेतं पुरुष महान्तं आदित्यवर्णं तमस्ः परस्तात्

Greater than the light of a thousand suns rising together. Have you discovered that spiritual centre within you around which you will have to begin your quest? Always remember, whatever else you may do in life, whatever your profession may be, whatever your work and wherever your work may take you, the quest towards inner growth should always continue. And that surely is the final and ultimate dimension of the human personality. And therefore, friends, I would like to know whether these six dimensions are being addressed by our University system. We are very distinguished and experienced educationists sitting here on the dias and in the audience, I would urge you to ponder upon these points, and to try and see what needs to be done to develop a holistic and integrated education that would take cognizance of these various elements of the human personality.

Friends, today is an exiting time to be alive. We are a privileged generation. We

are the first generation to have seen that photograph of Planet Earth taken from outer space. No generation before us, none of the greatest people before us, have seen that because only now did we have the technology to throw a human being outside the grip of gravity and take the photograph. That shows our earth as it really is, a tiny streak of light and life against unending vastness of outer space, so beautiful and yet so fragile. The earth, \*raFfr 3 ^ prcr, has nurtured us from the slime of primeval ocean, from unicellular micro-organisms to where we are today. And the future beckons to us. I would urge the young graduates today not to give way to negativity or cynicism. We cannot afford the luxury of negativity.

We are facing the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced in its long history, the transition to the global society. And India must spear-head this great transition. Because, of all the civilizations of the world, India alone has the philosophy, has the pluralistic approach and the technological background to be able to do this. But we cannot do it if we are constantly bemoaning our fate. We cannot do it if we are building walls of hatred within our own societies, whether they are based on religion, on caste, or on political parties or on any other premise. We have got to build a united and an integrated nation. India has a historical destiny to fulfil. And that destiny has to be fulfilled by young people like you who today have received your degrees and prizes from your distinguished Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor.

While, therefore, congratulating the Shivaji University on its considerable achievements, let me end with great exhortation from the Kathopanishad which I would like to leave in the minds and hearts of the young graduates. It exhorts us to awake and arise and move onwards across the razor-edged path towards our goal. There are no soft options left any longer, either for individual salvation or collective redemption. We have to move along a difficult and dangerous path, but that is the only path that will take us to our goal of a higher consciousness, a new society, a new India and a new world. This is an exhortation which, I hope, will ring in your ears wherever you go.

उतिषठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरात्रिबोधत् ।  
क्षुरस्य धारा निषिता दुरूत्यया ।  
दुर्गमं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

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