

SRI JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR BAHADUR (1919-1974)



Sri Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar Bahadur was the Twenty fifth and last Maharaja of the princely state of Mysore from 1940 to 1950. He was nephew of the Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV and was a well-known Sanskritist and a composer of traditional Carnatic music. He helped the Western world discover the music of a little-known Russian composer Nikolai Medtner (1880–1951), financing the recording of a large number of his compositions and founding the Medtner Society in 1949. He was the first president of the Philharmonia Concert Society, London in 1948. He was also the Founder-President of Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council).

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY
CONVOCATION ADDRESS
BY
SRI JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR BAHADUR
ON DECEMBER 24TH, 1961

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR, GRADUATES OF THE YEAR,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am very happy to have this opportunity of addressing the Convocation of Banaras Hindu University. I was glad to accept the Chancellorship when it was offered to me a few years ago. The honour was all the more attractive because the position had been originally held by my revered uncle of happy memory. I have been sharing the hope of all the well-wishers of the University that it should grow with the years and become a noted centre of advanced knowledge in the arts and sciences acquired and perfected in an atmosphere of peace, order and true culture.

I have been much impressed by the large number of young scholars who have been admitted to the various degrees today. Several among them have won the special distinctions that the University has to bestow. I offer my hearty congratulations to all of them on the successful culmination of their efforts and the realisation of their academic ambitions. In the growing opportunities of our independent national life I earnestly hope that they will find fruitful and congenial scope for the exercise of the intellect and the discrimination that the University has helped them to develop.

While wishing them the greatest possible prosperity and success in their chosen professions I would like to appeal to them to keep in their minds always the ideal of social service and exhort them to be on the look-out for opportunities to put that ideal into practice. It would be very good for the country if all educated persons strive and find ways of combining the pursuit of their own legitimate advantage with some measure of selfless effort in the interests of society as a whole. Indeed, we have a right to expect from our Universities and Other academies of higher education that they should not only instill knowledge and build up character but also stimulate and reinforce the social sense of the young men and women who come to them to be equipped for life.

The advance of civilization has always been accompanied by the growing influence of society on the life of the individual. To get the best out of individual merit and make it fruitful it is essential that it should be exercised in an atmosphere of social harmony and conscious mutual helpfulness. I would like the Graduates to think that the knowledge and ability that they are now taking with them into the world of practical affairs will shine all the more if they dedicate at least some part of their time and energy to social service in the field in which they have acquired efficiency and aptitude in the course of their stay in the University.

In sending out year after year thousands of young men and women of approved ability the Universities may be said to be broadcasting so many seeds of knowledge and culture in the land. Universities are rooted in society and they draw sustenance from it; and it is in conformity with the laws of nature that soil and seed should enrich one another and that the fruits of University education should in their turn stimulate the production of a crop in the society in which they flourish. This service is tendered in part when University men and women labour at their vocations, practice the professions in which they have acquired knowledge and skill, assist in the administration of the country or in business and in a variety of other ways discharge the duties of specific post and positions in conformity with the Upanisadic injunction "*Kurvanneveha karmani jijiviset satan samāh*" which means 'that one should wish to live a hundred years discharging faithfully the duties that pertain to his station in life.'

There is, however, a much larger field of social service which calls for the enthusiasm and public spirit of persons of willingness and ability, and this field is as wide as the nation itself. However, much we may expand our Universities they could only provide directly for a very small percentage of the people. A large part would remain without the privilege of higher education and in a comparatively backward country vast numbers are found to be in the unfortunate position of having no education at all in the academic sense of the term. In such circumstances it is the duty of the educated classes, the fortunate minority who have had the advantage of University education, to purvey at least some portion of their knowledge and culture, and in particular the practical benefits that result from them, to the masses at large. It is not enough if the people are self-reliant and hard working. In every sphere of life there has been so much scientific progress that expert guidance is a necessity at almost

every step. Since very large numbers of the people cannot come to the places where education is dispensed, knowledge has to be carried to them; and a great part of this work is best done as social service by educated men and women.

It does not require much imagination to realise how very greatly the nation would benefit if every degree-holder who goes out of the University resolves earnestly to make some contribution to the advancement of society in the special field of his interest and capacity. There are two spheres in particular in which an immense amount of work has to be done, not all of which can be undertaken or carried out by the State, namely, those of adult education and education for health.

As a nation we are still subject to the reproach of mass illiteracy. The intensified drive for compulsory elementary education is very good as far as it goes. We may look forward to a time in the near future when we shall have achieved the target of universal education among the young. But there are at the present day millions of unlettered men and women in the country who are above the school-going age, many of whom with a long expectation of life, who cannot be allowed to languish in life-long illiteracy. It is not merely a question of the desirability of teaching letters to the ignorant. Illiterate parents of school-going children are always at a disadvantage. Probably also they will appreciate better the value of schooling for their children when they are themselves participants in educational progress. Their self-respect would be fortified if they come to be on the same level as their literate fellows. Citizenship in a modern democracy requires a basic minimum not only of occupational skill and economic ability but also of general knowledge and the academic means of acquiring it. It is not right that any part of the people should be left behind in the march of progress. Urgent organised effort is therefore necessary in the field of adult education.

So too there is vast scope for devoted service in the spheres of medical relief, health and sanitation all of which still suffer greatly from the effects of popular ignorance and lack of guidance. Alleviation of suffering and instruction in the ways of clean and healthy living are among the noblest kinds of service that man can render to man. Recent years have been witnessing considerable expansion in the work of the Departments of Medicine and Public Health; and a great drive has also been organised as part of Community Projects and National Extension. Service for both prevention and cure of

deficiencies and distempers in the health of the people. But the problem in our country, particularly among the preponderant population of the rural areas, is so immense that it needs a good deal of voluntary social service to supplement Government action. Here again is a field for the exercise of the talents of qualified University men and women devoting such part of their time and effort as they can spare without prejudice to the demands of their own professional practice. As a great proportion of this work has to be undertaken in rural parts this will also serve the object of restoring the contact with villages which our intelligentsia seems to be progressively losing.

There are many other matters in which a helping hand could be lent to the less advanced sections among our people, as for instance in making them realise the rights and obligations of democratic citizenship, or helping them to understand world affairs or assisting them to cultivate a taste for art and culture.

All these are activities which are eminently suitable for voluntary social service by young and enthusiastic educated men and women. By undertaking and performing these tasks during a part of their spare time they would be at once helping to secure the future of the nation and discharging the debt due to the past. It is necessary, however, to carry out these duties as a mission and not as politics or pastime, nor for profit and publicity. Those who engage in social work in a true spirit of devoted service could take pride in the thought that they are following, reverently and modestly, in the footsteps of the greatest social worker in our history, Mahatma Gandhi.

I have been speaking of the manner in which some at least of the fruits of University education could be carried to the people at large. For University education to percolate to the masses and 'quicken our national life, as well as to fulfill its own more direct purposes, it is necessary that education should be broad based, well-balanced, rich not only in knowledge but also in cultural and spiritual content, and pursued in an atmosphere of unbroken tranquillity and dignity. For as the Maha- narayanopanisad puts it "*Same sarvam pratisthitam tasmad samah paramam vadanti*": Everything rests on peace and tranquillity; peace therefore is the highest value. And as Prof. Whitehead points out 'The attainment of Truth belongs to the essence of peace.'

In this age of spectacular advance in scientific knowledge and the overpowering impact of science on human life it is perhaps necessary from

time to time to emphasise the importance of other aspects of human affairs and other branches of study in our institutions of higher learning. The Universities are devoted to the pursuit of every kind of knowledge that is worthwhile and the studies in which they engage derive their value as much from synthesis as from specialisation. I would like to enter a fervent plea on behalf of the humanities and studies in literature and art and urge that a proper balance and systematic co-ordination be maintained as between them and the physical sciences, in our Universities and among our scholars. There is no impassable barrier separating the sciences from the humanities. Scientific methods are followed in both categories of study. All of them depend for the furtherance of their objectives on observation, reflection, judgment and the accumulated treasures of past achievement. Man is the central factor in all of them. Man's interest in the physical sciences is engendered as well as limited by the capacity that they have to affect his life, to give him mental satisfaction, to promote his ambitions and enrich his prospects. Researches and studies in physical sciences are pursued by man for man. Those sciences deal with the world of matter in the midst of which man has his being. The humanities and the mental and moral sciences have the added interest of having man himself as their subject of study. Here does man shine in his own illumination—"*Atrayam purusah svayam jyotir bhavati*" as the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanisad (4-3-9) puts it.

The pattern of the association of man and matter in the acted epic of human history has to be followed also in the scheme of studies of our institutions of advanced learning. In proportion as scientific research and technological invention expand and become intensified the pursuit of the humanities and the social sciences also acquires added importance. The practical application of the fast-growing discoveries of science demands the refinement of many human qualities and the proper determination of values among matter, mind and spirit in the age of science and of machinery the proper study of the humanities, the liberal arts and the moral sciences has assumed unprecedented importance, because without an adequate expansion of his own mind and spirit man cannot be equal to the task of ruling over Nature with vision or safety. The study of the relation of man to man is no less important than that of the relation of matter to man. Among the many things that we have to learn in order to make a success of life under modern

conditions the most important is the art of the co-ordination of scientific knowledge, philosophic thought and spiritual striving.

The Universities therefore have to serve the cause not only of the exact sciences, not only of studies of patent practical utility like economics or law or administration, but also in equal measure of literature, of history, of philosophy, of ethics and religion. It is obviously not possible for any individual scholar to carry on advanced studies in all these branches of knowledge, nor is it necessary; but it is important that all these have to be cultivated in the Universities side by side so that society as a whole could have comprehensive and well-balanced equipment and a congenial atmosphere fully equal to the needs of cultural modern life.

Literature holds the mirror up to nature; and to read literature is to read life. In urging the maintenance of literary studies at a high level in our Universities I should like to make a special appeal in respect of Sanskrit. Culture is enshrined in its very name. It nourished the roots of our civilization and has enriched every language that is now spoken in our land. It helped our ancestors to rise to great heights in many branches of learning, including exact sciences, and has given us epics and plays of immortal fame. It instilled in the mind of the nation the faculties of clear thinking, logical analysis and precise and attractive expression. It has served the cause of music and other fine arts and of good taste and refinement. It has produced celebrated manuals of government and of law. In its development, literature and morality came to be woven into each other's texture, and philosophical speculation went hand in hand with guidance in practical life. Above all it has been the incomparable medium for the cultivation of *Brahmavidya* and the demonstration of the superiority of the inner self over the outer world. The language in which the *Bhagavadgita* has been given to the world can never cease to dwell in our minds and hearts. Sanskrit must necessarily find an honoured place in our seats of learning for all time to come.

The study of history and philosophy is equally invaluable. They place at the disposal of a generation all the fruits of the experience of previous ages and the results of the exploration of the regions of truth by the great minds of the past. Like science, history also is widening and lengthening. More knowledge about the past is being constantly acquired as a result of historical research and archaeological discovery, and the passing of the years is all the

time adding fresh chapters to the story of man. The phenomenal improvement in the means of communication is transforming the world and knitting the strands of the history of countries and continents into a single fabric. We need not take too seriously the Hegelian cynicism that the only thing we learn from history is that men rarely learn anything from it. If men have not learned enough from history it is time that they started doing so. We can derive a great deal of practical benefit from the examples and warnings of history in many spheres of intimate interest to us at the present day, including those of the working of democratic processes and the complexities of international relations. The contents of history and the annals of men and states constitute a laboratory for the observation and study of political and social behaviour and its prizes and penalties.

Philosophy teaches breadth of vision and the faculty of estimating real values. The study of Indian philosophy has long been holding out an attraction to scholars and savants of many lands. The *Upanisadic* thinkers have explored every quarter of the realms of human thought and these have also been extensively traversed and charted by our celebrated systems and our great teachers like *Sankaracharya* and others. As an ally of morality and of religion our philosophy has dominated our cultural history. In an age of growing materialism and thoughtless rivalry, philosophy can play a great part in dispelling the thin delusions and foolish ambitions that divide heart from heart. An important place in our Universities rightly belongs to the study of Indian philosophy by itself and in comparison with other philosophical systems of the world.

The wisdom of our forefathers was responsible for developing academies of learning in places of religious eminence. Varanasi, Kanchi and Madurai were examples of such an association of learning and piety. This served as a pointer to the truth that religion and ethics are of the highest importance in education and that learning has everything to gain and nothing to lose by being cultivated in an atmosphere of sanctity, popular devotion and peace.

In the present age man needs religion as he has never needed it before. I am not referring to forms of religion or those aspects of it that get involved and lost in unthinking quarrels and irrational rivalries, but to true religion, of which morality is a valuable component, which purifies the heart, clears the

understanding, ennobles conduct and ensures righteousness. Human nature has been described as a battleground where a perpetual conflict rages between the demoniac and the divine. In this conflict it is religion and morality alone that can ensure the victory of the right over the evil.

Mankind has now entered upon the most critical period of its history. Scientific progress has put enormous power into the hands of man. His knowledge has expanded in all directions and he is fast becoming the master of external nature. But knowledge carries no antidote against its own misuse. Thoughtlessness or perversity can in an instant destroy the entire structure of civilization that has been laboriously built up through the centuries and even depopulate the earth. Neither the knowledge of the sciences nor even the wisdom of philosophy can save civilization unless all men earnestly and consciously cultivate a passion for righteousness and develop that fellow-feeling which is an important tenet of real religion. There is no opposition between science and religion, nor any inconsistency between it and the secular state. True religion dwells in the heart, does immense good and can do no harm. Some powerful agency is needed to teach righteousness and positive morality. Indifference to morality is immorality. But this is a sphere in which law is not all-powerful. Legislation cannot ensure virtue or decent modes of thought and this is just the field where religion and morality must rule.

In our efforts to build up not only intellectual power but also social harmony and virtuous conduct, our Universities will always have to play a prominent part because it is among them that the continuity of civilization has to be ensured through the proper training of the youth of each generation. May our universities achieve ever-increasing success in this noble endeavour! There is nothing holier for this purpose than saving that knowledge—'*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitrāmiha vidyate*'

I offer my heartiest good wishes to Banaras Hindu University and all its Members

Jai Hind

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