

DR. VENI SHANKAR JHA



Dr. Veni Shankar Jha was an educationist and Administrator of considerable repute. He was born at Bah, Agra district of Uttar Pradesh on 19 June 1899. Morris College, Nagpur mentions him as its faculty and alumni. He got his Ph.D in Philosophy from London University.

He started his teaching career from Morris College and later he joined educational service of Central Provinces & Berar, as Divisional Superintendent of Education. He was a member of committee appointed by the Central Advisory Board of Education 1944 for the successful operation of Government's plan for post war development of education. This committee was headed by Sir Maurice Gwyer the then Vice-chancellor of Delhi University.

He was DPI of central provinces & Berar from 1946 to 1953 and later he became chairman of Public Service Commission of Madhya Pradesh. He remained on this post till mid of 1956 when he was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University. As Vice-chancellor of B.H.U. he visited USSR in 1956. His tenure in B.H.U. though was mediated by student's protest, yet he could launch many innovative developmental works. He also made valuable suggestions for plans to be implemented during second Five year plan in B.H.U. He resigned from the post of V.C. of B.H.U. in Dec. 1959 and finally left this post on 16th April 1960.

He was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1971 by the Govt. of India. Dr. Veni Shankar Jha passed away on November 9, 1986.

BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

BY

DR. V.S. JHA

ON NOVEMBER 13TH, 1956

[His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Etheopia was Conferred Honoris Causa by a special Convocation held for the purpose on the 13th November, 1956.]

Your Imperial Majesty,

May I avail myself of the privilege of tendering to Your Imperial Majesty my felicitations on the unanimous decision of the University to confer upon Your Imperial Majesty the degree of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa ? The University feels proud and honoured in conferring upon Your Imperial Majesty the highest distinction which lies in its power to confer and hopes that the happy ties created today between Your Imperial Majesty and this seat of learning will endure.

Your Imperial Majesty is no stranger to our land. Your reputation as a significant moral force valiantly asserting itself against the insanity of crude might had already travelled to this country long before Your Imperial Majesty honoured it by a personal visit. Surely, there are many amongst us who have watched with admiration Your Imperial Majesty's gallant career, devoted to the cause of building up of national self-respect and of the well-being of the people over whom Your Imperial Majesty reigns. Your Imperial Majesty is regarded in my country as a symbol of the undying human spirit which defies defeat and inspires faith in the ultimate triumph of what is just and true. In the darkest hour of your country's history when the cruel might of aggression appeared to have all its way, Your Imperial Majesty stood firm as a rock and inspired the people with the hope that in the ultimate settlement of the country's destiny the will of its free people alone shall triumph. It is difficult to forget the solemn words which Your Imperial Majesty addressed to the League of Nations; words at once brave and prophetic which constitute one of the most soul-stirring orations ever delivered in the defence of the freedom of a proud country. Your Imperial Majesty impeached the arrogance of power and announced to the wavering League of Nations that "apart

from the Kingdom of the Lord there is not on this earth any nation superior to any other." This is the spirit which has inspired and sustained the nations which have been the victims of foreign domination. In the same strain the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, taught us that no nation is too weak to stand for what is right. We are aware of the unfortunate fate of the League which, though convinced of the right cause, failed to stand by it. We are also painfully conscious of the doom which visited the aggressors as well as the craven and selfish world which just watched, if disapprovingly, the wrong done to Your Imperial Majesty's country. Our country may recall with no small satisfaction that in the final battle for the liberation of Your Imperial Majesty's country from the foreign yoke, the blood of some of our men was mixed with that of Ethiopian patriots in the great sacrifice that they were called upon to make. Events much nearer time give special significance to the warning which Your Imperial Majesty administered as far back as in July, 1936 that the world which complacently tolerates a lapse of morals in international life is doomed to a deadly peril. What our Prime Minister has most aptly described as "the collapse of conscience" is the most ominous symptom in the international affairs. Thank God that the world conscience has rallied round the just cause and averted what might have proved to be the saddest catastrophe in human history. The statement which Your Imperial Majesty and our Prime Minister have recently signed at New Delhi should hearten the world in as much as it emphatically reasserts those moral and human values which are essential to the building up of enduring peace.

The contribution which Your Imperial Majesty has made towards the amelioration of the social and economic conditions of the people will provide glorious chapters in the history of Ethiopia. One single social reform, the abolition of serfdom and of compulsory labour is enough to bring immortality to Your Imperial Majesty's reputation. The great development that has been taking place in Ethiopia particularly since 1946 would constitute a proud record of achievement revealing the country's resolute determination to progress. The constitutional reforms promulgated in 1955, the year which celebrated twenty five years of Your Imperial Majesty's reign, are of far-reaching importance in the political history of Ethiopia. They provide for considerable widening of the civil liberties of the people, strengthening of the powers of the legislature and enlargement of the chamber of deputies based upon the principles of universal suffrage. The judicial system of the country has also been radically reconstructed

on a federal basis. The land policy under Your Imperial Majesty's reign has undergone significant changes. The new laws provide for equalisation of land taxes and abolition of feudal charges. Development of agriculture has received Your Imperial Majesty's special attention. A new College of Agriculture has been established and departments of agricultural research created. In the field of social services we are aware of the measures taken by your Imperial Majesty to fight disease and suffering by opening a large number of hospitals. Education enjoys Your Imperial Majesty's special vigil. A large number of schools have been established at the instance of Imperial initiative and the needs of Education—all types and stages—are receiving growing attention. It is not possible to proceed without mentioning in this context the measures which have been adopted to improve the salaries and conditions of service of the teachers in Ethiopia.

Your Imperial Majesty is anxious, as we in our country are anxious, to harness as quickly as possible the natural resources of the land for the commonweal to develop the economic potential of the country and to raise the standard of living—as well as that of culture—of the people. I have no doubt that in those spheres, as in others, Your Imperial Majesty's determination will triumph and that the country will revive its ancient glory described by historians as the "true Eldorado sought by the great Empires."

Ethiopia can claim like India a hoary past and long traditions of culture. The two countries have maintained intimate commercial and cultural relations down the ages in history—relations which brought enrichment and glory to both. Some scholars identify the 'Kusha Dweep' of Pauranic geography with the Ethiopian land. One who reads Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyna, cannot but fail to be impressed by the close and intimate ties which bound Ethiopia and India commercially and culturally. Apollonius also refers to a large settlement of Indians in Ethiopia who were there not as colonists but as friends whose most important ware was philosophy. Apollonius is reported to have recorded the following appreciation of philosophical wisdom of some of the Indian settlers in Ethiopia: "And that I was right to admire them and that I am right in considering them to be wise and blessed, it is now time to convince you. I beheld men dwelling upon the earth, and yet not upon it, I beheld them fortified, without fortifications, I beheld them possessed of nothing and yet possessed of all things." James Fergusson goes to the extent of suggesting that the great monolith at Axum is of Indian inspiration; "the idea Egyptian, but the details Indian. An Indian nine-storied pagoda, translated in Egyptian in the first century of the Christian Era." He

found its likeness in such Indian temples as Bodh-Gaya and refers to it as that curious marriage of Indian and Egyptian art which we would expect to find in the spot where the two people came in contact and enlisted architecture to symbolise their commercial union." The commercial and cultural connection between Ethiopia and India were so close that some of the Greeks appear to have been confused about the identity of the two races. According to Rawlinson, Homer spoke of two races of Ethiopians, the Western or African Ethiopians and the Eastern Ethiopians. Rawlinson also points out that Herodotus applied the word Ethiopian to the Dravidians of Southern India. The Greek Ktesias also spoke of "the Indian Ethiopians." According to another historian, Warmington, Pliny's sole mention of Barygaza, (now Broach) the chief centre of commerce on the Indian side, is to say that some held it to be an Ethiopian town "on the seashore beyond" Ujjaini, Broach, Cambay, Axum and Alexandria appear to have constituted a busy commercial line.

The ties that bind the two countries into friendliness and mutual respect are ancient. It is but natural that the two countries should be anxious to cement their old bonds and to unite in their endeavour to rebuild their economies and to promote their cultures. A great many problems are shared in common by us, the most important being to provide sound education to the masses of people and to build up in the shortest period of time a large army of scientists and technicians who would be competent to enable full utilisation of the resources of our countries and their industrial and agricultural progress. Our systems of education cannot also sufficiently emphasise the need of inspiring those moral and spiritual values which are essential to the peace and happiness of mankind and to the enrichment of human relationships. The University rejoices over the recent statement which has been issued jointly by Your Imperial Majesty and our beloved Prime Minister. The statement affirms our ideological identity based on the principles of 'Pancha Shila' and our determination to maintain friendly commercial and cultural relationships. May this spirit endure:

On behalf of my University and of myself I take this opportunity of offering to Your Imperial Majesty and to the people over whom Your Imperial Majesty reigns our sincerest good wishes.

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