

Convocation Address
at
Gautam Buddh Technical University Lucknow
Delivered by
Justice Ramesh Chandra Lahoti (Former Chief Justice of India)
on
28th day of December 2011

Your Excellency Shri B.L. Joshi, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Chancellor of the University/ Distinguished Prof. Kripa Shanker, the Vice-Chancellor / Esteemed Members of the Executive Council and the Academic Council / Respected Faculty Members / Dear guests, parents and families / Dearest graduating students.

Introductory

I feel honored and privileged to have been given this opportunity of speaking to you and sharing some of my thoughts through this Convocation Address on this auspicious and memorable day, the Ninth Convocation of Gautam Buddh Technical University, formerly known as Uttar Pradesh Technical University. The occasion is both joyous and solemn. It represents a major milestone in the careers of young graduating students. I know the time, effort and dedication that are required to obtain such a prestigious academic qualification. My whole-hearted congratulations to you for all your achievements!

There is another section in the audience, whose presence needs to be acknowledged with gratitude - your parents, families and your teachers.

Your parents and your families have made sacrifices for your success. They have made available the resources and, more than that, provided you emotional support to see your endeavors and aspirations being fulfilled. Your faculty and teachers are symbol of learning, devotion and commitment. They all are partners in your success and glory. They too deserve to be congratulated. Today, they are here to offer their blessings to you. Blessings are valuable, you already know. Yet, I would like to restate what blessings are? What they mean to all of us?

Blessing is the sovereign act of God and the power to bless is like power of God bestowed by Him. To seek blessings is your right; blessings are your assets; but, they are accompanied by obligation. All the blessings which we enjoy originate from Divine deposits, deserved by the meek and humble, and committed to our trust on this condition that the fruits thereof shall be dispensed for benefit of others.

Soon on conclusion of the proceedings of convocation, may I remind and request you to bow your heads unto your parents elders and teachers. Do *pranaam*. Touch their feet. And, seek their blessings.

It has been very aptly said – ‘Every door that swings wide for you has somebody on the other side opening it.’¹ Your teachers having imparted you the instructions to the best of their ability and conscience, they have done their duty and done it well and at the same time they have swung the doors open for the next chapter of your life. Evaluate and remember what they have done for you, what impact they have made on your personality and how they have exerted in preparing you for your future.

¹ Criss Mathews – in *Life's Campaign*

Whatever be your career, whatever you may be engaged in and where ever you may be settled, continue to keep in touch with your teachers. Parents and teachers are the happiest persons to see their students and wards prospering and making a mark in life.

You are fortunate to have received the best of education in the best of university. You have graduated. But, I continue to be a student, even at this age of mine. Both of us are students and so we can have a free exchange of views. Your instructions have been imparted by the best of your faculty. My school masters are 'experience'-the experience, which comes only with age and exposure to the challenges of life. Carlyle said, "Experience is the best of school masters, only the school fees are heavy."² And, let me tell you -they are wise who learn by the experience of others, and save the school fees. Your education, your wisdom and your simplicity – all taken together, persuade me to share with you some of my thoughts, fostered by experience, because they will be, I hope, well received this day. These are by way of a few tips, as I think to be of utmost relevance, in the times in which we are living and which would be of immense utility to you in the world in which you would be finding yourself, soon on exiting the University portals.

Remember - Gandhi and Gita

Gandhi

It has been a task for India to earn its freedom and independence. It is more difficult a task to preserve what we have earned. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, earned independence for us. On our shoulders

² Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays*

lies the responsibility to not only preserve but also to strengthen the hard earned freedom and nationhood of India. This objective can be achieved if we have faith in, and follow, the Gandhian values in what we think, say or do.

The crisis which the world is facing today is the crisis of values. None of the social orders, called by whatever name, is free from such crisis. Gandhiji was a staunch believer. He had respect for all the religions of the world. He believed that the quintessence of all religions is truth and worship of humanity. He has said that all religions teach us that two opposite forces (good and bad, ideal and evil) constantly act upon us and that the human endeavor consists in a series of eternal rejections and acceptances.

It cannot be denied that today we live in a world apparently torn by divisive tendencies of various forms, political and ideological encounters, social inequalities and rigidities, and above all – economic inequalities of an explosive potential.

To understand real secularism, the only solution to various problems arising out of religious discordance is, to put into practice the unique Gandhian belief. Gandhi transformed the so called eternal values of the religion into relative truths of ethical principles and put them together as *ethical religion*. By doing so he proposed to establish a social order of ethical laws through morally justifiable social instruments into the realms of social action. Gandhi believed that every religious belief should satisfy the test of being consistent with contemporaneous demands. He did not hesitate in filtering the religious tenets through his own sieve of

acceptability. For example, he did believe that all religions preach equality and so does Hinduism. When he found Hindu religion justifying untouchability, he rejected those scriptures which justified it. The strongest element in Gandhian approach was the unity between the theory and action. For example, brotherhood was universal principle in which he believed. He translated the same in action by serving the poorest of the poor. He wore only such clothes as the poorest of the poor could afford.

By defining truth as God, Gandhi in effect put God and Science in the same box. Religion could not be thrown out precisely because materialism and materialistic philosophies have failed to answer questions relating to man's values and spiritual quest. Gandhi was a practical idealist who, while believing in the spiritual foundations of the universe, did not hesitate in accepting its material base. Hence he is easily acceptable to the youth with a modern and/or scientific outlook. Gandhian values brought success to the non-violent struggle for independence. Numberless youth jumped into the peaceful revolution of Gandhi and felt inspired by him. Gandhi and Gandhian values continue to be potently relevant waiting to welcome with open arms the youth of the day; it is the youth which has to turn to Gandhi.³

You may ask -What Gandhi has to do with Science and Technology? It is interesting to know that Gandhi and Einstein were contemporaries. Gandhi lived from 1869 to 1948 and Einstein lived from 1879 to 1955. Both were believers and had faith in spirituality. Einstein, the greatest

³ Thoughts on Gandhi and Gandhian Values liberally borrowed from '*Gandhian Values and 20th Century Challenges*' Patel Memorial Lectures – 1979, **Dr. J.D. Sethi, Member Planning Commission**

scientist of the preceding century, believed in existence of God as the Creator of Universe. He believed that everything which happens is predestined to happen; nothing is a matter of chance or accident. This belief was held in common by Gandhi and Einstein. They admired each other. It may be interesting for you to learn that in 1944, on Gandhiji's 75th birthday, that was Einstein who wrote the now universally quoted words: "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever, in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth." It is Einstein who authored the words which have become a memorable quote- "Science without religion is lame; Religion without science is blind." Gandhi too believed this. Gandhi and philosophy accommodates this truth.

I feel inclined to quote two other sayings of Einstein which you must learn by heart. He said:

"Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature. For this reason a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e. a wish addressed to a supernatural being. However,..... our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that, actually the belief in the existence of all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith..... Everyone who is seriously in pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is indeed quite different from the religiosity of someone more naïve."*

At another time he wrote:

“(I have known) from daily life that (every)one exists for other people.....A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.”*

And Gandhi said:

“We cannot do without either (religion or science).....each in its own place”*

“I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know God is neither in Heaven, nor down below, but in every one”*

Are the sayings of these two great men of 20th Century, one a saint other a scientist, not echo of each other? Gandhi and Einstein brought together, in the backdrop of the events which are a part of History, the previous century would be known better as ‘The Century of Physics, War, Satyagrah and Peace’.

Armed with knowledge of technology if you wish to shine with glory by serving the society to your best, I appeal to you to read and learn more about Gandhi and Einstein.

* All quotes from – *Albert Einstein and Mahatma Gandhi*, **Dr. Y. P. Anand**, published by National Gandhi museum, New Delhi

Gita

A word about religion. True religion is real living, a life lived in its fullness. Not just a fantasy, it is a code of exemplary virtues. It is a guide to corrections and prevention of errors. All religions and all religious scriptures are codes of such ethics. Abraham Lincoln put it at its best when he said-When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That is my religion.”

All religious scriptures of the world are Repository of Values. What is meant by ‘values’ is the practice of those principles and patterns which bring perfection in life. Practicing ‘Values’ makes the life perfect and truly valuable. To put it in other words, values are those virtues which the society of the day considers as desirable and worthy of inculcation from the view point of personal and collective good, both. To achieve perfection in life and to be useful to the society it is essential to have values so imbibed into your personality that they become natural to you, as part and parcel of your life.

Everyone is free to choose his own Book of Faith. To me, the book of my faith is *Bhagavad Gita*. It has given me (i) courage to face life, (ii) efficiency in work, (iii) knowledge as source of power, (iv) capacity to concentrate, (v) overcoming lust and anger, and (vi) living with affordable purity in life - I repeat, affordable purity of life - which is consistent with realities.

Every human being can achieve heights nearing to divinity. In Gita, the Lord says – ‘practice whole-hearted devotion to Me. Surrender all your deeds as an offering to Me and you will be free from any adverse consequences of your actions.’ This is easy to say but difficult to practice.

However, Swami Vireshanand of Ramakrishna Order says that in order to cultivate this belief and action one shall have to live by certain qualities which are (i) friendship towards all, (ii) freedom from pride, (iii) cheerfulness and calmness in all circumstances, (iv) perseverance in whatever we undertake, (v) self surrender to the Lord, (vi) not troubling others in body, mind and speech, (vii) remaining unperturbed and uninfluenced by irritation caused by others, (viii) always maintaining purity in thoughts and actions, (xi) not being troubled when someone (criticizes or)abuses us or becoming over ecstatic when one praises us, (x) looking upon the whole world as our own home.

Thus this Holy Scripture gives us a complete value system leading to perfection in life – where intense action combined with concentration, coupled with knowledge, and love towards God as per our belief, is made practicable.⁴

Have a Role Model⁵

You are standing at the threshold of embarking upon a career or prosecuting higher studies. Shortly you will be shouldering a dual responsibility of shaping yourself and also rendering service to the Nation and the humanity at large. The philosophy underlying the concept of service is belief that whatever you become in life, your parents, your teachers and the society as a whole have contributed therein and once you are capable enough, you have to return and repay their obligations.

⁴ *Gita for Everyday Living*, Published by Shri Ramakrishna Muth, Mylapore, Chennai. Chapter 31 – ‘Values in the Bhagavad Gita’, **Swami Vireshananda**.

⁵ Thoughts inspired by ‘*I am a Voice without a Form – thoughts of Swami Vivekananda*’. Published by **Swami Jnanadananda**, Adhyaksh Ramakrishna Muth, Hyderabad

To do so, and to be successful in life, it is necessary/ advisable to identify your goals and someone as your role model.

In the complexities of world there are some who find their own path. Not all are blessed with such vision and courage. Comparatively easier course is to follow the footprints of someone who appeals to you as your role model and is suited to your vision. Choose someone, who has, while parting, left behind his foot prints on the sand of time, the footprints, which you can follow.

If you were to accept my counsel, I would strongly urge you to take Swami Vivekananda as your role model. He is one who had said – ‘I do not want my name to be made prominent; it is my ideas that I want to be realized.’ He had said – ‘Rise! Awake! And stop not, till the goal is reached.’

The Voice of Vivekananda is as vibrant and radiant as it used to be in his life time. The thoughts of this Prophet of modern spiritual renaissance are more relevant today than ever before. His electrifying message of the divinity of man, of peace and harmony emerging from the realized and realizable truths of religion, uniting mankind with the silken thread of shared faith, is no longer the luxury of a few blessed souls. It is a sheer necessity for the survival of humanity itself. Anyone who believes in possessing purity in heart and is concerned with the achievement of complete well being for all, will find that the orientations of Swami Vivekananda make that goal achievable. These virtues in the youth, you and the like of yours, are a sheer necessity.

To anyone who feels the call of duty towards himself, to the society and to the humanity generally, the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is a powerful source of noble thoughts and practical strategies that concretize and actualize the firm steps in discharging such duty.

Swami Vivekananda never believed in preaching; he lived by his ideals. God blessed him with the gift of extra-ordinary qualities and capacities. He was a great orator and a singer too. His singing enthralled his master Sri Ramakrishna himself. He also designed the temple for him at Belur Muth which is indeed an exquisite architectural tributes to his great Master. Swamiji also designed the suggested emblem of Ramakrishna Order.

Believe me, if you follow the footsteps of Swamiji you can also reach the heights near to him and someone of you may even excel him.

It is for you to choose your own role model, but do have one.

Excellence

Never compromise on anything less than the best. This is the secret of achieving shining success in life.

Raj Kapoor, the doyen of Hindi cinema shot into prominence and became an international figure on the success of film '*Mera Naam Joker*'. In an interview given to Press, it was asked of him what was the secret of his success? His answer was simple. He said (some thing like this) – 'for accomplishing my any of the projects, I do not compromise on anything less than the best. I choose the best script writer, the best lyricist, the best

singer, the best music composer, the best photographer, the best actors, and so on. The result is that my every creation becomes the best.'

During my tenure as Chief Justice of India, I had declared the year 2005 to be 'The Year of Excellence' in Judiciary:

I had said:

'Excellence consists of five 'I's – Initiative, Intelligence, Industry, Integrity, Inobtrusive personality - (i) Initiative – We shall not be satisfied with doing just what is our duty. Each one of us shall exert to do better than his contemporaries or predecessors going beyond the goal of duty and to be better than himself; (ii) Intelligence – None of us shall feel satisfied by mediocrity i.e. by just being average; (iii) Industry – Each one of us shall exert to put his competence and capability to its maximum utilization; (iv) Integrity-adherence to moral and ethical principles shall be our sheet anchor; (v) Inobtrusive personality i.e. modesty and humility. Imbued with initiative, intelligence, industry and integrity what has been achieved is just what is the basic requirement of the personality of a judge. Such achievements should not be a reason for developing any egoistic attitude.

In short, each one of us individually, and all of us collectively, should be able to say that the year 2005 was our finest hour. In the words of Homer – “Always to be the best and be distinguished above the rest”.

I have the satisfaction of saying so that, in the assessment of independent observers, the year 2005 did prove to be the year of excellence in judiciary.

Today, standing amidst you, while I look in retrospect, I think that the five constituents of excellence which were thought of in the context of judiciary are relevant in every field of human enterprise.

Fight against Corruption

Having armed yourself with education and skills in technology you are prepared to shoulder the dual responsibility: of serving yourself by embarking upon a career, and of serving the Motherland that is India. The biggest challenge which India is facing today is of corruption. Corruption is eating into the roots of society. It appears to have assumed dimensions beyond comprehension. It is well known that corruption is the cause of innumerable social, economic and political evils. It tears the moral and ethical fibers of civilization. In spite of industrial growth and economic prosperity, corruption results in concentration of wealth in the hand of a few, making the poor poorer and deprived more alienated. The worst comes when people accept corruption as a part of life and give up the resistance to it. Still worse is that corruption poses a threat to the democracy itself.

It is indeed regrettable to note that as per the reports of Transparency International, In the Corruption Perception Index, India was at number 71 in the year 2001; it has slid down to number 95 in the year 2011.

To redeem India from corruption our hopes are riveted on youth and technology. Younger generation is full of enthusiasm and is bestowed with the capacity to fight and retaliate against evils. Youth with right mindset and empowered with right technology can prove to have zero tolerance to

corruption. The reason is simple – a man may be corrupt; machine is not. A machine can be easily programmed to follow a corruption free process. In all such areas, where information technology has stepped in, transparency has increased and corruption has moved out. Our youth is driven by meritocracy, yet, it is sensitive to the needs of less privileged. People like me believe that the youth, especially the one which is empowered with technology, once it assumes the commanding position, corruption would itself drain out and India would again be a world leader.

It is universally proven and accepted that information and communication technologies are powerful tools for controlling corruption. It is necessary to see that ICTs are embedded in broader institutional reforms. ICT has enhanced transparency. It can make it difficult to intermeddle with transactions.

The young brilliant students such as you, nurtured in institutions like GBTU, and armed with technology must take a vow, this day, that you will do your best to eradicate the evil of corruption and thereby save our democracy from sinking.

What you can do? I suggest the following three steps for you to take:

- Step 1:** Take a vow that you will not indulge in corruption – neither give nor take a bribe. After all, charity begins at home.
- Step 2:** Make a determination that you will use technology, in particular the ICT and your intelligence, for preventing corruption;

Step 3: Aim that you will devise such techniques and broader programs of institutional reforms as would enable introduction of transparency and zero tolerance for corruption in all public dealings.

These three steps, I do hope, would prove to be your non-violent revolution against corruption and would certainly show the results.

Fundamental Duties

As I belong to the field of law and justice, my address to you will not be complete unless I refer to the Constitution of India, one of the finest and best written Constitutions of the world. It has a chapter which is the least known and often forgotten but which, to my mind, appears to be of utmost relevance to every citizen of the country and must be learnt by-heart by every student. It enumerates the Fundamental Duties. Article 51A reads as under:-

Art. 51A. – It shall be the duty of every citizen of India –

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;*
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;*
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;*
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;*

- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;*
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;*
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures;*
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;*
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;*
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.*
- (k) Who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.*

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India told the Lok Sabha (on 28-10-1976) that the moral value of the Fundamental Duties would be to establish a democratic balance by making the people conscious of their duties equally as they are conscious of their rights. In my opinion, these Fundamental Duties enlist the sense of all the religions and bring out what every citizen of this country including the youth can contribute to see India as a fully developed nation, a world leader.

Epilogue

You have listened to me with patience; I am beholden to you.

George Bernard Shaw had said-“I believe that the people who get on in this world...are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want...and if they don't find them, make them.”

Let me present my parting thought, my message and my good wishes to you through a small poem⁶:

*The contest lasts for moments,
though the training has taken years.
It wasn't the winning alone
that was worth the work and the tears.*

*The applause will be forgotten,
the prize will be misplaced.
But the long hard hours of practice
will never be a waste.*

*For in trying to win, you build a skill.
You learn that winning depends on will.
You never grow by how much you win,
you only grow by how much you put in.*

*So any new challenge you've just begun
Put forth your best and you've already won.*

All the best. And, Good Bye.

⁶ Patel and Patel, *Inspirational Thoughts*, p. 93