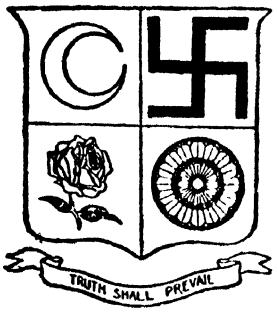

UNIVERSITY OF DACCA

Convocation Address

BY

THE RT. HON'BLE SIR AKBAR HYDARI
NAWAB HYDAR NAWAZ JUNG BAHADUR
P.C., D.C.L., LL.D.

Life Member of the Court of the Dacca University
Chancellor, Osmania University
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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT is with particular pleasure that I have accepted the invitation of the University of Dacca to deliver the Convocation Address this year. As perhaps you are aware, I am a Life Member of your Court, and from the earliest days of your existence as a University, I have thus been privileged to take a personal interest in your progress. Moreover, the contact between this University and the Osmania University in Hyderabad has been of the most cordial and most friendly character. You were the first of the Indian Universities to recognise our Degrees. You also allowed our Science Graduates to enjoy the advantage of the facilities, which you provide for higher scientific studies, until such time as our University was able to organise these facilities for itself. By this generosity, so characteristic of the best traditions of academic life, you have placed us under a debt of gratitude which we shall not forget.

The University of Dacca is fortunate in occupying a unique position among the homes of learning in this country. You were the first-fruits, as it were, of the Calcutta University Commission, to whose epoch-making Report the debt owed by Indian educationists is by no means liquidated. You were also privileged to begin your work under the most favourable auspices, for you had the benefit of the brilliant direction of Sir Philip Hartog, your first Vice-Chancellor.

It was not merely in the circumstances of its creation and in the personality of its first Vice-Chancellorship, that your University was favoured by fortune; it enjoys the

additional advantage of connection with a great centre of Indian culture. The city of Dacca was well fitted to become the home of a University, which stands for all that is best and most enduring in the combined cultures of India and of the Western World. Throughout the neighbourhood, of which Dacca is the Capital, archæological remains, still to be discerned, give evidence of a great and varied history. The very name of your City is attributed by some to the Hindu goddess Dhakeswari, whose shrine is located here. Surviving monuments in your district preserve the names of the famous Jhasa Pal and Chandra Pal; while, if local tradition is to be trusted, the village of Bikrampur recalls the even earlier fame of the great Vikramaditya.

To this early basis of traditional Hindu and Buddhist culture, the Muslims have made their own contribution. Such distinguished Governors as Mir Jumla, connected also with Deccan history, and Shaista Khan, nephew of the Empress Nurjahan, maintained a brilliant Court and enriched your City with magnificent public buildings. Indeed, the traditions of Shaista Khan are preserved to this day in the well-known style of architecture, to which he has given his name.

To the Hindus and the Muslims, there have succeeded the British, with their own contributions to the life and prosperity of your City, and as aids to your economy several industries have sprung up since their advent, among these the great jute industry.

Based in this manner upon the four great streams, which together contribute so much of colour and movement to the broad river of our culture—the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim, and the Christian—your great City is supremely fitted to be the home of a University such as yours, which takes all knowledge, whether ancient or modern, whether of the East or of the West, as its distinctive province.

Under the stress of modern conditions, we sometimes forget what is still the primal function of a university. In ancient days, in our own country as well as in the West, a university was a gathering-place of people, eager to learn and clustering round famous men who could teach them. This ancient ideal tended to be forgotten, both in the East and in some parts of the West, and a university was regarded merely as an examining body, conducting semi-inquisitorial functions. You in Dacca were the first among the modern Universities in India to strike out against such distortion. You realised that to discharge the duties which a university should fulfil, certain things were necessary. Students must live near their teachers; for this reason, Dacca became a residential university. In the next place, students must have access to their teachers; for this reason, Dacca has established the tutorial system. In the third place, learning must be both imparted and enhanced; for this reason, you founded a strong tradition of research and of original work. Finally, the university must be a focus of intellectual activity; for this reason, you devoted assiduous care and attention to the creation and maintenance of a magnificent library.

But we do not live for ourselves alone. We, Members of the Faculties, Graduates and Under-graduates of the University of Dacca, all owe certain duties to our motherland, not only as individual citizens but also as members of a great academic institution.

There is one problem, which alike in its gravity and in its national importance, claims our primary attention, I mean the problem of the differences that appear to exist between the two principal communities of India. I for one refuse to believe, that those differences are not capable of a lasting solution, such as would, on the basis of a common nationalism and of national endeavour in the service of a common patrimony, lead to mutual respect

and understanding. We are perhaps too religious-minded a people to follow the more radical path of secularisation which countries like Turkey have adopted. Religion enters every detail of our daily life, but it does not follow necessarily that, in so entering, it should serve to take away from us the qualities of sympathy and toleration, which the teachings of every religion inculcate. That distinguished philosopher of our time, Mr. Bertrand Russell, has pointed out that the strongest of our collective passions are group-hatred and group-rivalry, and whatever the cause or causes which lead to such hatred and rivalry between the two Indian communities—whether political, economic or cultural—the fact that such hatred and rivalry are based upon religion makes them the least appreciable and perhaps the most tragic of all. Yet here, in this University and in Universities like it, which have all the blessings of the atmosphere which surrounds a house of learning, we can learn and show to ourselves and to others the value of toleration and sympathy, and the baneful effects of hatred and jealousy. I know that you in Dacca have done much to learn these lessons and to exemplify them. This is but natural, for you have not only fostered Muslim education; you have advanced further in that you have also provided points of understanding between Hindus and Muslims. In an age when the bitterness of rivalry has led even erstwhile protagonists of nationalism and unity—I speak of men of both communities—to profess disillusionment, and all the modern weapons of publicity and propaganda are being diverted from their true end, and are being employed for creating and expressing the unedifying passion of hatred, a spirit such as yours is widely needed, if we are to be true to our motherland and to ourselves. This country, which has given us birth, has not sprung from any one race, creed or culture, and the pages of its history are writ large with the contributions, not of any one community but of all the different communities, which it has

nursed and who have given collectively of their best to make of it a beautiful land. We have received from our past a heritage of magnificence and splendour, and you have only to look at the grandeur and refinement, symbolised in the sculpture of Ellora and the frescoes of Ajanta, or in the beauty and grace enshrined in the Taj Mahal, to derive lasting inspiration from the very fact of their co-existence. In our life and customs, speech and thought, we in fact accommodate the different cultures that gave birth to these monuments. Yet, is it not a tragedy that those very factors, which should inspire unity and assist the growth of a national consciousness, are to-day being used to emphasise separation? Urdu or Hindustani, for example, which by its very origin symbolises the effort of Hindus and Muslims to understand each other through the medium of a common tongue is being to-day characterised as the language of a particular community and hair-splitting discussions are being attempted on the rival claims of different dialects? To the vocabularies of our language and of these dialects, unfamiliar words are being added from distant languages, in order to emphasise the differences rather than the similarities. Our common festivals, too, which are occasions when the joys and sorrows of one community are shared by the others, are fast becoming occasions for communal clashes, while movements are on foot even to boycott these meeting-grounds of the two communities, where their two cultures mix and fuse.

You, however, in the community life which is so admirable a feature of your University, have opportunities, shared, alas, by too few other Indian students, of appreciating the strength of the ties which bind us all together as one people. Just as a wider outlook and a national consciousness will rid us of the trammels of obstructive parochialism or sectional claims, one way in which we can all assist, in creating a wide national front by way of outlook and effort, is to dissociate ourselves

from sectional or " communal " activities; let us undertake, for example, never to belong to any institution that represents such purely sectional or communal endeavour. Another way lies—if I may use the term—in " decommunalising " our histories.—Descazes had said of the needs of France during the Restoration: " Royalise the nation and nationalise royalty." Similarly, let us " decommunalise " our histories which urgently require such treatment. You will be glad to learn that the Education Department in Hyderabad has just produced the first of its history text-books for schools, based upon this principle, and is shortly to follow it up with similar text-books designed for other stages of the education of our younger generations. A third way, perhaps a more assiduous and leisurely but none the less an effective way, lies in the study of science or mysticism, the store-rooms, respectively, of logic and precision, spirituality and the inner meaning of religion. To the scientist and the mystic the whole world or mankind is one; differences of faith to the one have but an objective significance, while to the other they denote absence of true spiritual perception.

Yet another problem of gravity and importance is the problem of India's poverty. Incidentally, the giving of due importance to this problem and to the economic motif in several movements, which appear ostensibly to be communal, will not only serve to distinguish the economic from the purely communal conflicts, but also put in their proper places the communal and economic questions that face us. In examining these and kindred problems and their real importance, in relation to the life and well-being of our people, our Universities and their research faculties can be the clearing-houses of such examination, where experience and information can be pooled and sifted, and the adjustments necessary for our life as a nation on the path of progress can be formulated. That such adjustments are needed is apparent to any one, who looks at the different aspects of the life of India

to-day, particularly when the task of nation-building has over a fairly wide field been entrusted now for the first time to Indian hands. Let us, therefore, start with a full realisation of the responsibilities that lie ahead and with unity among ourselves.

One of the adjustments we have to make among many others, in order that we may make our equipment in different fields accord with the life and requirements of our people, is the reconstruction of our education. On this subject about 13 years ago I made certain suggestions when I was privileged, in the same way as now, to deliver the Convocation Address of our sister University in the Punjab and from which, in view of the recent discussions, may I detain you with a few quotations? I then urged

> whether instead of having three different stages—Primary, Secondary and University—into which education is at present divided and in which the object of each stage is the preparation for the next higher stage, " *it is not possible to have three distinct classes of Education, each self-contained, having a well defined goal and each especially adapted to the attainment of that goal.*".... Thus " *the first and most important stage of education,* which *I would prefer to call Essential education, ought to include all subjects which are of primary importance—subjects, the knowledge of which is useful to every citizen of the State, whatever trade, calling or profession he or she may choose to follow, as tending to increased efficiency or better citizenship.*"....This course would, with suitable Readers, Syllabus, and School Libraries, include through the medium of the vernacular most of the present Middle School course and even something of the present High School course....These " *Schools should not be merely literary—text-book reading schools—but should have a practical side—agriculture, gardening, cottage industries* (*if they are in the districts*), *arts and crafts* (*if they are*

in the city). An experiment on these lines, which we are conducting in Hyderabad, shows how much greater progress the boy, who devotes a part of his time to learning the use of his hands for some trade, can make in the same time even in the ordinary curriculum laid down for the primary and secondary stages. On the completion of the essential course thus designed, the boy would either leave school altogether for the practice of agriculture or some trade, for which the primary education so organised might be regarded as his technical education, or he would enter" a High School.....These Schools *"should each of them aim at giving a vocational training complete and adequate as far as it goes,"* and would include Schools of Engineering, Medicine, Law, Government Secretariat, Commerce, and Business with a less protracted and expensive course than the present, which would give the country and, especially the village side, Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Agriculturists and Businessmen, etc., expecting but a moderate remuneration....

"The University would then *take charge of students after they had emerged from these* vocational High Schools *weeding out such as proved themselves inadequate or undesirable,"*....which *means that* it would *"take charge of the direct instruction and training only of a limited number of selected students—limited by the ability of the students themselves to follow the University course, and limited also by the number required to satisfy the estimated needs of the country.....What I may call the lower activities of the University would thus be simplified and abridged, allowing it more freedom to pursue its higher activities, by which I mean research and specialisation and also, the investigation, consideration and solution of the educational and cognate problems which from time to time arise in*

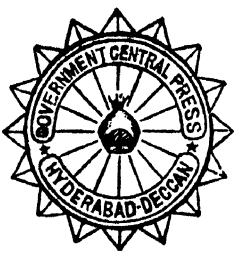
every civilised country, sometimes becoming as acute as its political problems, and which the calm impartial judgment of the learned, working in an atmosphere free from all suspicion of racial, communal, bureaucratic or political taint, can best solve."

Accompanied by a vocational bias from the earliest stages, these proposals, on which the educational system of Hyderabad is being reorganised, will eventually result in adapting our educational system to the needs of our people and thereby diminish the number of unemployed which is likely to increase, if education remains, as it largely is to-day, divorced from the realities of our economy. This does not, however, mean that any great limitations, except those of fitness and requirement, will be placed in the way of those, who wish to benefit by a study of the humanities or the liberal sciences which go so largely to the making of culture in a man. What it does prevent is the repetition of that tragic situation, by which multitudes of young men, wholly unfitted for a University career, are allowed—nay, forced—to enter the Universities in the hope of securing some quite subordinate clerical employment or other. From the walls of your University are bound to emerge those who will play in the future an active, indeed, a directing part in many branches of the educational structure, and the same holds true of the different Universities that to-day function in India. It is largely your task, therefore, to do planning in education, so as to bring it as far as possible in consonance with your needs.

I have spoken already on the need to "decommunalise" our histories. I am only thinking aloud of course, but I venture in that process to make a further suggestion to you for what it may be worth. Many of you must no doubt have read and been interested to read of the suggestion made by Mr. H. G. Wells regarding the necessity of a world encyclopædia to act as a compendium, con-

stantly kept up-to-date, of knowledge in all its branches. Whether a scheme so ambitious as this will materialise in our own time I cannot say. But I am convinced that a project of this kind, if applied on a more modest scale to our own country, would be of real and lasting utility. Co-operation between the Universities of India might well result in the creation of an Indian Encyclopædia designed for the same purpose, though perhaps not executed on the same lines. A work such as this, where knowledge of all that pertains to India can be co-ordinated and made available for the general benefit, would not only lead to better and more exact information but also, I am sure, strengthen our own feelings of oneness as a people and our responsibility to our country and to each other.

One last word now to those of my young friends, whether Graduates or Under-graduates of this University, who have still their lives before them to live. Perhaps at no epoch of our history had any generation of the youth of this country before it a greater task or greater chances of fulfilling that task than the present. That chance exists wherever you look, provided there is manhood to undertake it. May you, my young friends, realise the scope of work which is yours and the great future which you can make not only for yourselves but for our people as a whole.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